PLURALISM AND TRUTH IN RELIGION:

AN ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE OF THE IDEA OF EXISTENTIAL TRUTH

PROPOSED BY KARL JASPERS

AS A RESOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF PLURALISM AND TRUTH

By

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ii

ABSTRACT

In simplest terms, this thesis is an analysis and critique of Karl Jaspers' discussion of one of the central problems facing contemporary religious thought -- the problem of religious truth as it arises within contemporary consciousness of religious pluralism. Specifically, it looks at Jaspers' affirmative answer to the question, "Can more than one religion be true?", and seeks to determine the adequacy of the idea of truth whereby Jaspers explains such a possibility. It is, then, an analysis of Jaspers' idea of "existential truth" or, more exactly, of his use of that idea in explaining religious truth in a situation of religious pluralism. While finding Jaspers' thought influential and important, the thesis concludes that it is finally inadequate, and develops a series of related criticisms explaining this inadequacy -- criticisms which simultaneously point toward other ways of approaching the question of religious truth which might be more adequate to the reality of religious pluralism.

PREFACE

The present study grew, so to speak, from the very
atmosphere of a department of religious studies which is devoted
quite explicitly to maintaining a pluralistic context for thought
about religion. In that atmosphere, where students and faculty
encounter other religious traditions not only in books but in
the person of their colleagues, questions about religious truth
have gained a certain legitimacy, even though they are still
far too often excluded by the dominant mode of historical
scholarship.

The specific impetus for this study came from Harry
Wardlaw, Professor of Philosophical Theology at the Melbourne
College of Divinity, who first introduced me to Jaspers during
the 1971-72 academic year when he served as visiting professor
at McMaster University. It was Harry who made introductions
to Professor Fritz Buri and helped with arrangements for a
delightful spring and summer at the Theologische Fakultät in
Basel. Buri's enthusiasm for the project, his long familiarity
with Jaspers' work, and his personal involvement in inter-
religious dialogue provided a context of cheerful and critical
support during that period of research at the university where
Jaspers spent the final third of his academic life.

Specific acknowledgement of those at McMaster who
helped me during the course of this study is difficult because
the list of both faculty and fellow students is so long. I

iv

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Some Notes on References and Translations:

(1) For the sake of convenience Jaspers' works are r[...]d

v

to in what follows either by title alone or by abbreviations
(in the case of book-length and frequently cited works).
Complete bibliographic information along with a listing of
all abbreviations is given in the Bibliography.

(2) Where foreign language sources are cited, the translation
is my own unless otherwise indicated.

(3) Since Jaspers has, in general, been well served by his
major English translators, I have not hesitated to use their
translations even though I have checked them against the original
whenever I thought it necessary. My only change in these trans-
lations has been my use throughout, for reasons of consistency,
of "encompassing" to translate umgreifend.

(4) When translating from German I have not capitalized abstract
nouns like "being" or "spirit" or "transcendence." There is no
grammatical warrant for such capitalization and it actually
falsifies Jaspers' sense. I have, however, left such
capitalization as appears in other translations.

(5) Following the practice of Jaspers' translators, I have not
translated "Existenz" and have not treated it as a foreign word.
I have taken it over into English, just as Jaspers took it over
into German from Kierkegaard's Danish.

<div align="right">J. F. K.</div>

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I

INTRODUCTION

In simplest terms, this thesis is an analysis and critique of Karl Jaspers' discussion of one of the central problems facing contemporary religious thought -- the problem of religious truth as it arises within contemporary consciousness of religious pluralism. Specifically, it looks at Jaspers' affirmative answer to the question, "Can more than one religion be true?", and seeks to determine the adequacy of the idea of truth whereby Jaspers explains such a possibility. It is, then, an analysis of Jaspers' idea of "existential truth" or, more exactly, of his use of that idea in explaining religious truth in a situation of religious pluralism. While finding Jaspers' thought influential and important, the thesis concludes that it is finally inadequate, and develops a series of related criticisms explaining this inadequacy -- criticisms which simultaneously point toward other ways of approaching the question of religious truth which might be more adequate to the reality of religious pluralism.

In this introductory chapter (1) a brief and general discussion of what is meant by the problem of pluralism and truth in religion will be followed by (2) introductory remarks about Jaspers, especially as regards the rationale for choosing to study his thought on the topic of religious pluralism and truth. These first sections lead to (3) a preliminary statement of the thesis to

be argued, and thus of both the goals and limitations of this study.
Finally, (4) a brief methodological discussion of the way in which
Jaspers' thought will be approached will be followed by a con-
cluding outline of the structure or movement of the discussion in
subsequent chapters.

1.

It is a commonplace of everyday experience as well as of
learned comment that there is today little consensus and less clarity
concerning religious truth.[1] For those of us who live in the modern,
secular, post-religious West,[2] any reference to "the problem of
religious truth" actually entails a complex tangle of different but
related problems.

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[1]While the concern of this entire study is to move toward a
more adequate understanding of what is meant by "religious truth,"
a few preliminary remarks about the way in which the term is being
used here are called for. In the first place, religious truth
refers to the truth claimed by a religion or the truth of religion
as distinct from various historical or sociological or descriptive
truths about religion. Thus, secondly, the term is used here in
the quite straightforward sense that religions - - even when, as is
often asserted, for instance, about forms of Buddhism, they make no
claim to deal with speculative theological or metaphysical issues - -
make claims about "the way things really are" at least insofar as
the reality of human destiny and salvation are concerned. Religious
truth, then, refers primarily to the truth claims or proposals for
belief made by a particular religion. Cf. William A. Christian,
Meaning and Truth In-Religion (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University
Press, 1964), pp. 4-6, 10-14. Finally, this primary sense of the
term involves the corresponding claim made by the religions to
provide a true way or ways of living in accord with the proposed
truth of belief.

[2]This characterization of our age as well as this entire
introductory discussion of the problem is obviously, for purposes
of brevity, sketched with very broad strokes.

In a most general sense, religious truth is problematic
insofar as perhaps the most characteristic attitude concerning it is
one of practical indifference. A general climate of skeptical
relativism which dichotomizes facts and values, restricting the latter
to the sphere of privacy, creates a situation where even for the
believer judgments of religious truth are often indistinguishable
from matters of taste or opinion - - except, of course, during those
historical episodes when they erupt into the public realm in the form
of ideological frenzy. The situation has been well described by the
theologian Karl Rahner in response to the question "What does the
average European of today feel about religious truth?" - - except
that his reply is pertinent not only to "the average European."

> His attitude might perhaps be described as follows.
> Apart from the simple facts of direct sense experience
> which can be verified anew at any time by experiment,
> there are theories and opinions and nothing else . . . .
> Knowledge of truth, to the extent, that is, that it is
> constituted by a definite content has, therefore,
> moved from the center of human existence to its
> periphery. It belongs with things like color
> of hair, taste, race, on which man's absolute value
> cannot be made to depend.[3]

In such a pervasive climate of practical skepticism
there are, as already stated, a whole range of specific issues
or problems concerning religious truth. Yet what is perhaps
most significant is a general shift in the ground of debate about
religious truth. Thus the fundamental questions are no longer

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[3]Karl Rahner, _Inquiries_, 1964. Cited by James Schall,
"The Nonexistence of Christian Political Philosophy," _Worldview_,
19.# 4 (April 1976), pp. 29-30.

primarily questions of fact - - questions about this or that religious truth, about the truth of this or that religion, or even about whether the claims of any religion are true. Such traditional questions about the truth or falsity of religious claims are, to be sure, still prevalent. But the more fundamental questions have to do with whether or not it is at all appropriate to understand religions in terms of truth - - and if it is, then how is such truth to be understood? They are, then, not _factual_ questions about whether this or that is true, but _logical_ questions about the very idea of "religious truth."

Thus, to take but two examples from recent discussions about religion, the famous (or infamous) _University_ debate on "Theology and Falsification" and recent discussions about religion and science both exemplify the shift in philosophical thought about religion from the question of factual truth to the question about the meaning or logical status of religious truth claims. The _University_ debate[4] turned upon the question of whether religious assertions make any sense _as assertions_, as statements which could be judged true or false. Or are they cognitively meaningless and thus not properly matters of truth (at least of religious truth) at all?

Similarly, recent discussion about religion and science,[5]

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[4]Cf. _New Essays In Philosophical Theology_, eds. Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM, 1968), pp. 96-130.

[5]Cf. especially the work of scientist-philosopher Michael Polanyi and discussions inspired by his thought.

discussion in large measure prompted by the type of attack on

religious belief found in the "Theology and Falsification" debate,

illustrates both this shift in the focus of philosophical concern

about religion and the logically problematic status of the idea

of religious truth. In response to the accusation of cognitive

meaninglessness, the effort has been made to ground cognitive

significance by showing the logical similarities between religion

and science. Yet the difference between scientific truth and

religious truth implied in these efforts is revealing. For while

there are not only continual (factual) disagreements about

scientific truths, but also (logical) disagreements about the

meaning of "scientific truth," there are no such disagreements about

whether it is appropriate to speak of truth in matters of science.

It is, in fact, precisely because there is general agreement that

science is a matter of truth (and because science is often taken

as the paradigm instance of the very idea of truth), that efforts

to establish the appropriateness of speaking of religious truth

have turned to comparisons between the logic of religion and the

logic of science. The necessity for such efforts serves to

underscore the difference between science and religion. While

efforts to understand the idea of truth in science stem from the

presupposition of that truth, similar efforts to understand the

logic of religious truth claims are, in fact, finally concerned

to establish the legitimacy of speaking about "religious truth."

Now among the many specific issues involved in and

illustrative of the generally problematic character of the idea

of religious truth, one particular issue of major contemporary

significance is the problem of pluralism and truth, or the problem

emerging from the apparently conflicting truth claims of the

various world religions. As John Hick notes in a new chapter

devoted to this problem in the most recent edition of his

Philosophy of Religion, "this issue now emerges as a major topic

demanding a prominent place on the agenda of the philosopher of

religion today and in the future."[6] It is a problem which is

increasingly actual or pressing - - both for those religious

persons engaged in the dialogue of religions[7] and for those

engaged in reflective analysis of religion.[8] It is, moreover,

an issue which brings the problematic logical status of religious

truth into particularly sharp focus. As John Hick notes in the

passage just cited, "the skeptical thrust of these questions goes

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[6]John Hick, Philosophy of Religion (2nd ed.; Englewood
Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 119.

[7]While a record or survey of the recent rise in such actual
encounter has yet to be attempted, two significant examples from
among many for North American Christians would be the person, life
and death of Thomas Merton - - cf. for example, his collection
Mystics and Zen Masters (New York: Dell, 1967) - - and the 1972
Mount Savior "Symposium on World Spiritualities" recorded in
Word out of Silence, the special double issue of Cross Currents,
XXIV #2-3 (Summer-Fall 1974), 133-395.

[8]An attempted complete listing even of very recent
literature would be vast indeed. Works which have been used
in this study are listed in a special section of the Bibliography.

very deep; for it is a short step from the thought that the different religions cannot all be true, although they each claim to be, to the thought that in all probability none of them is true."[9] And it can be said with equal justice, to paraphrase Hick, that it is but a short step from the frequently voiced claim that all of the great religions are in some sense true to a perplexing problem about the propriety and meaning of the word "true" being used here.

People have always, of course, been aware of the fact that there were many religions, and there have always been some who took seriously the truth claims of other religions. Yet a general awareness of the historically changing and culturally specific character of particular religions (including one's own), along with a more widespread appreciation of the richness and plausibility of other religions, is a more modern phenomenon. It is, moreover, this new or heightened awareness, itself born of a new world-historical situation, which has generated the particular issue with which this study is concerned.[10]

The new world situation has been described and explained in many ways. Whether greeted optimistically as "a global village"

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[9]Philosophy of Religion, p. 119.

[10]What follows is simply a brief evocation of the problem which makes no claim to completeness. An analysis of Jaspers' understanding of the problem is presented in the next chapter. For a good, still brief, but more detailed discussion of the factors leading to this new sensitivity to religious pluralism, cf. Charles Davis, Christ and the World Religions (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), pp. 26-39.

or anticipated with trepidation as "a brave new world," the
advent of a potentially universal and homogeneous world culture
under the impetus of modern scientific and industrial technique
has been recognized as our new spiritual situation at least since
Hegel. Increasingly the spread of technical rationality along
the trading routes and (more recently) the airwaves of the world
has penetrated the previously secure boundaries of particular,
traditional cultures. It has simultaneously brought these
cultures into protracted, demanding contact with one another and,
perhaps more significantly, with the emergent, largely alien, yet
inescapable presence of modern industrial civilization.

The resulting - - and, of course, still emerging - -
situation for the religions is first of all a situation of
varying degrees of <u>crisis</u> (or at least of radical change) brought
about by the diminution of the particular, traditional culture in
which a given religion's pattern of life and self-understanding
was rooted[11] and by the necessity, again in varying degrees,
of adapting to the new (secular) cultural situation.[12] Secondly

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[11]This is, evidently, not to suggest a relativist equation
of religion and culture, but only to state the obvious fact that
"any concrete formulation of a religion . . . has to integrate it
with a culture." John Dunne, <u>The Way of All The Earth</u> (New York:
Macmillan, 1972), p. 126. For a detailed argument about the
necessary interweaving of religion with culture, cf. Wilfred Cantwell
Smith, <u>The Meaning and End of Religion</u> (New York: New American
Library, Mentor Books, 1964).

[12]It is perhaps worth noting in passing that it is a
failure to take seriously this first, critical aspect of the present
situation which gives to many discussions of the second aspect,
the convergence of the religions, such an air of unreality. The
rhetoric of pluralism rings hollow when it ignores or hides this
pervading homogeneity.

it is a situation of new and more sustained contact between the world religions and, as so often noted, of an actual or potential convergence of the religions.

One way of characterizing this new situation of encounter between the religions would be to say that it is no longer simply a matter of a primarily "academic" comparison of doctrines and data, but has become a meeting of persons. As Wilfred Smith remarks, "the large-scale compilation of data of the nineteenth century . . . has in the twentieth century and particularly since World War II been supplemented by a living encounter -- a large-scale face-to-face meeting between persons of diverse faith."[13] The new awareness of other religions emerging in this situation, then, is not simply a matter of knowledge, but more significantly a matter of growing respect, appreciation, and mutual influence - - and this during a period of increasing self-criticism and loss of confidence resulting from the first-mentioned crisis aspect of the new world-situation.

Yet this new or heightened consciousness of religious pluralism which is characteristic of our situation is not without complexity and ambiguity. It is, in fact, deeply problematic, although in some respects its problems are also quite significant

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[13]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Comparative Religion: Whither - and Why?", in The History of Religions, eds. Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 32. The "Symposium on World Spiritualities" referred to above, n. 7, clearly illustrates this change as also does the framework of even such academic studies as Ninian Smart's World Religions: A Dialogue (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969) and William Christian's Oppositions of Religious Doctrines (London: Macmillan, 1972), Chapter II.

opportunities. For many, of course, it is understood as simply one aspect of that general sense of relativism which renders the whole idea of truth peripheral. For others - - those for whom it represents a serious encounter of persons and living faiths, char- acterized by openness and appreciation - - it is a consciousness troubled by serious, often unprecedented questions precisely as a result of this new-found appreciation of the plausibility of the other as other.

For some, of course, this awareness of pluralism raises the type of questions traditionally dealt with in the philosophy of religion (or philosophical theology) - - questions about the validity of any religion or about general truths which may be shared by several religions (e.g., that God or Divine Being exists; that miracle and revelation are possible). There are, too, especially for many Western Christians, theological questions - - not simply the old questions about how "the others" can be saved, but questions about how other religions as religions are to be understood and appreciated within the framework of one's own faith.[14] For many thoughtful persons, however, the pressing questions emerging from a heightened awareness of pluralism are neither strictly theological (since they do not presuppose the normative truth of

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[14]One way of formulating the "theological" issue faced by any particular faith would be: given the truth of that religion as normative, although not necessarily exhaustive or exclusive, in what sense might other religions also be considered true? For a good discussion in the shift in theological questions resulting from the new situation, cf. Davis, pp. 39-48.

any one tradition) nor the traditional philosophical questions (since they do presuppose that religion in some general sense is true or that there is religious truth). Their questions center, rather, on the adequacy of the widespread view, expressed variously and held with varying degrees of explicitness, that more than one religion is true or that all of the great religions are true, each in its own way as a symbolic, culturally and historically specific articulation of the inexpressible divine mystery. This last question is the specific concern of the present study.[15]

Quite typically, at least in the West, such a view about different religions being equally true, along with the doubts and questions associated with it, might arise in something like the following pattern of thought. The heightened awareness of pluralism

[15]It is necessary to be clear that no claim is being made here about the relative significance of these different questions or about their truth (insofar as one question either presupposes or precludes the answer to another). It is simply claimed that for many persons today consciousness of religious pluralism comes to focus in the last-mentioned question and the purpose of this study, then, is to try to shed some light on the legitimacy of this way of thinking about pluralism and truth. It may well be that this "modern consciousness" which precludes the possibility of any one religion being the truth, far from being the key to an adequate understanding of the problem of pluralism and truth, is itself the basic problem. To borrow a phrase from Wittgenstein, it may be a picture which holds us captive and bewitches our intelligence. Cf. John Kane, "Pluralism, Truth, and the Study of Religion," Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses IV #3 (1974/75), pp. 158-168, for a development of this suggestion. Cf. also Davis, pp. 26-39 for a discussion of the clear bias and intolerance in the widespread, yet a priori rejection of the very possibility that any one religion could be universally or normatively true - - a bias which is at least implicitly reinforced by the non-committal character of religious studies in the secular university.

resulting both from a growing appreciation of the other as other and an increasingly critical appropriation of one's own faith has made suspect, for many, the claim of any one religion to full or normative truth precisely by giving a certain legitimacy to many other claims. Thus, for example, Christian exclusivism is attacked from within. Recent efforts to develop a "theology of religions" are dismissed as insufficiently radical, as so many epicycles of theory used to shore-up a failing Ptolemaic (Christocentric) theology when what is really needed is a Copernican revolution.[16] After such a revolution, "there will not be Christian theologies, or Islamic theologies . . . but human theologies, which are not sectional but global in their use of the religious data . . . theologies based upon the full range of man's religious awareness."[17] A different, and far more modest example, would be the recent critique of so much phenomenology of religion because it effectively, whether explicitly or only implicitly, uses only one religion (Christianity) as normative.[18]

At the same time, however, assertions about the essential unity of the religions, their unitive origins and fundamental agreement ("they all really teach the same thing") are found wanting. Detailed scholarly work in the history of religions has shown such

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[16]John Hick, _God and the Universe of Faiths_ (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 120-132.

[17]_Ibid._, p. 103.

[18]J. G. Arapura, _Religion As Anxiety and Tranquility_ (The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1972), p. 3.

facile assertions of unity to be without basis. Differences

among the religions, for example, which were regarded as secondary

by earlier theories about the origins of religion, have been shown

to be as basic or original as similarities.[19] And it is the same

with regard to the subsequent histories and current expressions

of belief and practice. ―――――

> It is clear enough that there are structural
> similarities running through all the major
> religions . . . and that there are analogies
> among their doctrines, sometimes even striking
> analogies. But adding up all the similarities
> and analogies we can find among them seems to
> leave us far short of the evidence needed to
> warrant the claim that they are saying the
> same thing.[20]

If we take the religions at their word, "if we go by the words

enshrining their beliefs," we not only find no evidence for

unanimity, but rather that "there are different teachings" - -

real opposition, conflicting claims.[21]

Thus a "loose and sentimental"[22] view of the oneness

of the religions seems no more adequate than the orthodox assertion

of normative truth. Neither traditional "provincialism" nor a

more modern "cosmopolitanism" seems to come to grips with the actual

dimensions of the problem of pluralism and truth as it presses itself

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[19] Ibid., p. 4.

[20] Christian, Oppositions of Religious Doctrines, p. 116.

[21] Smart, p. 12.

[22] Christian, Oppositions of Religious Doctrines, p. 5.

upon this contemporary consciousness.[23] To the extent that some continue to affirm that their religion is the true religion, their "provincialism" is troubled by their awareness of and respect for the other religions as other and not simply as a preliminary or partial form of their own truth. To the extent that the experiences of others has led them to reject "provincial" claims, their "cosmopolitanism" is equally troubled by the fact that their truth bears strangely little resemblance to any actual religion (to the actual claims of the religions) and is divorced from the concrete life and practice so essential to the actual religions.[24]

What can be neatly formulated as a seemingly straightforward alternative, then, has become in the actual experience of many an extremely complex dilemma. If one is to speak of religious truth in the context of pluralism, then it can be said quite simply that either one religion is true (and all others either false or only partially true) or that something like "Religion" is true (and religions are true insofar as they embody or manifest this essence - - insofar as they all "say the same thing"). Yet it is precisely the unacceptability of either alternative which constitutes the dilemma and which has led to the suggestion of a third possibility as an escape from the dilemma. If no one religion may

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[23]The geographic metaphor is suggested by Peter Munz, Problems of Religious Knowledge (London: SCM, 1959), p. 8.

[24]The real problem with theories of general or essential religion is not so much that they are a sort of intellectual imperialism with reductionistic consequences, but that in seeking to be comprehensive they become empty and ephemeral.

be said to embody, in a final and normative way, the fullness of
religious truth, and if it is inadequate to find the truth of religion
in some hypothetical essence of religion or religion-in-general, then
perhaps more than one religion may be said to be true. In other words,
given the problems posed by the modern awareness of religious pluralism,
it is, perhaps, only in terms of a view which admits the possibility
that more than one religion can be true - - or that irreducibly
different religions may be equally true - - that the sense and legit-
imacy of assertions of religious truth can be maintained.

Such in any case is the type of view which has attained fairly
wide currency because of its obvious attractiveness for a heightened,
modern awareness of pluralism. If "the reality of pluralism must be
the starting point of any serious modern faith,"[25] then the assertion
that more than one religion could be true would safeguard religious
particularity and particular claims, allowing equal weight to
pluralism and to truth. This type of view is, of course, not new.
It might be said to go back at least to Friedrich Schleiermacher,
to whose influence so much in the contemporary study of and under-
standing of religion can be traced.[26] Yet if it is not new,

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[25]Maurice Friedmann, "Touchstones of Reality" in M.
Friedmann, T. Patrick Burke, and Samuel Laeuchli, Searching in
the Syntax of Things: Experiments in the Study of Religion
(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 23.

[26]Schleiermacher himself, as a Christian theologian, argued
the normative priority of the Christian faith. Yet in escaping the
Enlightenment dilemma of either natural or positive religion he
developed an essentially Kantian understanding of a religious a
priori which at once rejected natural or general religiousness and

it has become increasingly prominent because it seems to

meet the problematic demands of the type of awareness of pluralism

described above.[27]

— For many today, then, the notion that different religions

might be equally true is a promising and extremely attractive one.

Yet its attraction should perhaps be described as seductive, as a

"bewitchment of intelligence." For while all aspects of contemporary

consciousness of religious pluralism raise serious problems for

claims to religious truth, the line of thinking just summarized

raises with particular acuteness basic logical questions about

the meaning of "religious truth." Surely it is generally held,

as a critic of the view that "all religions are equally true"

stresses, that "what is really true for us must be universally

true, for that is what truth means."[28] Thus if it is claimed

that more than one religion can, strictly speaking, be said to

be true, it must be explained what the word "true" means in such

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affirmed the inevitability and validity of different, particular,
historic religions as expressions of that in se inexpressible
a priori. It is this type of analysis which has become influential
and the basis for the view that more than one religion can be
true. For a somewhat fuller discussion of Schleiermacher in
this context, and a brief comparison of Schleiermacher and
Jaspers, cf. Kane, esp. pp. 160-161.

[27]How often, for instance, one hears the idea that different
religions are concretely irreducible, yet both (all) true because
transcendentally unified.

[28]Owen Thomas, ed., "Introduction" to Attitudes Toward
Other Religions (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 20-21.

a context, lest it be reduced to some merely private sense like
"I choose this" or "I approve of this."[29] Put negatively, the
problem is whether the view that different, conflicting truth
claims can be equally true does not render the very idea of religious
truth vacuous. Put more positively, the problem is to determine
whether it is possible to understand religious truth in a way which
at once respects the particularity of the different traditions and
still gives substance to the idea of truth.

There are, of course, various efforts to arrive at just
such an understanding of religious truth. These different efforts,
moreover, tend to overlap at key points and to share various aspects
of a common type of approach to religious pluralism and truth. Still,
while an examination of the adequacy of this increasingly widespread
way of thinking is the general purpose of this study, no attempt
shall be made here to survey a variety of different theories or to
distill the major elements of a supposedly common theory. What is
proposed, rather, is more modest: a partial assessment of the view
that more than one religion could be true by means of an analysis
of the explanatory theory developed by one major and significant
proponent of that view - - Karl Jaspers. To put the matter
another way: the question with which this study is concerned is

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[29]There is, of course, a way of understanding the claim
that more than one religion is true which does not incur this
logical difficulty. George Burch, for instance, in his Alternative
Goals in Religion (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972),
argues that the major religions are equally true because they each
proclaim radically different, exclusive but not contradictory,
truths - - three separate, complementary absolutes. This interesting,
if highly speculative, view is not the type of position under
consideration here.

not the factual one, "Is there more than one true religion?", but
the logical or critical question, "Can there be more than one true
religion?" Even more precisely, the question takes the following
form: "Can truth in religion be (adequately) understood in such a
way that more than one religion can be true - - even when there is
clear opposition in the fundamental truth claims made by the
different religions?" Jaspers' thought is examined as a major
contemporary example of an affirmative answer to that question.

Before turning to some introductory comments about Jaspers,
however, two more points should be made about the problem area
which has just been sketched out. In the first place, and for
the sake of clarity, it should be emphasized again that the precise
problem under study is only one limited aspect of the general
problem of pluralism and truth (which is itself only one of many
problems related to the generally problematic character of
religious truth). The general problem or context of problems
raised by contemporary awareness of religious pluralism has been
touched upon both because it constitutes a constant horizon
within which thought about the precise problem occurs and because
increased clarity about the more precise issues becomes one way
of dealing with and making some contribution toward the resolution
of the larger issues. Still, while there is such an implicit
intention or direction of thought throughout the present study,
the explicit focus is limited to Jaspers' thought as one example
of a prevalent type of thinking and also to the critical or
logical questions which remain preliminary to what must finally

be the more significant questions - - those questions about the
actual validity of different religious claims which emerge in the
convergence or encounter of the religions themselves.[30]

Secondly, however, while the explicit focus is thus limited
and logical, the question under discussion is no narrowly academic
quibble. As thinkers of the stature of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche
have taught us, and as Jaspers himself stresses,[31] the question
of the meaning, and thus of the very possibility of religious truth
is a matter of "political" significance in the most profound sense
of that word. The continuing privatization of religious truth
and the corresponding paralysis of the great traditions of belief
are matters touching the depth and future of our humanity. His
awareness of this political seriousness is, in fact, prominent
among the reasons why Jaspers is taken to be a major and sig-
nificant representative of the general approach to religious
pluralism and truth being considered here.

2.

There are, of course, various reasons for the selection of
Jaspers' discussion of religious pluralism and truth as the focus
of this study. The most straightforward reason is the simple fact
that he has written a major work which deals with the precise

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[30]Cf. William Christian's discussion of the limited role
of such "critical philosophy" in Oppositions of Religious Doctrines,
pp. 8-12.

[31]Cf. Chapter II for Jaspers' analysis of the world-historic
significance of this issue - - an analysis in which both Kierkegaard
and Nietzsche are figures of prominent importance.

problem outlined above - - _Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung_ - - and that his claim to have provided an adequate resolution to this problem has yet to receive a detailed analysis and evaluation.[32] The more serious reason, of course, is found in the view expressed above that Jaspers is a major representative of the type of thinking about pluralism and truth which has just been sketched in broad outline.[33] There can be no argument to prove this estimate of Jaspers' significance, but a brief introduction to his discussion of religious pluralism will serve to illustrate some of the ways in which he is, in the best sense, typical and representative. Such an introduction is perhaps particularly useful in North America where Jaspers is known above all simply as "an existentialist," a title which probably conceals

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[32]The German original was published in 1962 and the English translation, _Philosophical Faith and Revelation_, in 1967. (As already noted, bibliographic data about reference to Jaspers' major works is found in the general Bibliography below). While there has been considerable discussion of the work in Europe, it has taken place almost entirely within theological circles in response to Jaspers' call for the transformation of Christian self-understanding. Although such discussion is clearly relevant to the issue of religious pluralism, there has been no major discussion of the problem of pluralism as such. In the "Introduction" to his recent book _Karl Jaspers: Philosophy as Faith_ (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), p. 11, Leonard Ehrlich announces a planned volume which will deal with the question of pluralism, i.e. with "Jaspers' effort to promote truth in religion by means of a philosophical critique of religion" at least "insofar as it pertains to that volume's topic of the political import of Jaspers' philosophical concern."

[33]No significant thinker is reducible to a type, just as no type, however well conceived, is adequate for what it is intended to include. It is such difficulty with the notion of "types of thinking" - - above all the way in which types can so easily, even unintentionally, become "strawmen" fitted to the purposes of one's argument - - which has led to the present focus upon the actual work of one thinker.

more than it reveals and one which he explicitly.rejected, [34]

and where he is known hardly at all for the thinking about religion

which became a major concern of his later years and about which,

as already noted, there has been much discussion in Europe.[35]

It is in a way ironic that Jaspers is not more widely

known particularly for his understanding of religion since he

speaks so persuasively not only to but also for a liberal,

enlightened, yet troubled mainstream of thinking about religion.

German theologian Heinrich Fries' testimony in this regard remains

substantially true today, a quarter of a century after it was

written:

> If according to Hegel's famous phrase an authentic
> philosophy is nothing other than "the era grasped
> conceptually," then this is especially applicable
> to Jaspers and his work. This philosopher and
> his philosophy express for many who cannot give
> expression to their thought that which is alive
> in them as the spirit of the age. Thus is the
> figure and the work of Jaspers representative:

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[34]Cf. above all the 1956 "Epilogue" to Jaspers' 1937
lectures originally published under the title Existenzphilosophie
(PE, pp. 95-6) as well as the 1955 "Epilogue" to the third edition
of his Philosophie (Ph I, pp. 11-12). What Jaspers rejects is not
only the catch-word which "remains like a phantom under whose name
the most heterogeneous things are treated as identical" (PE, p. 96),
but specifically existentialism as an attempt to absolutize human
freedom (Sartre) and as an attempt to develop an ontology of
freedom (Heidegger).

[35]Only his famous debate with Bultmann on "the question
of demythologizing" (published in English as Myth and Christianity)
is widely known, and that primarily because of theological interest
in Bultmann.

> he both presents and represents what is thought
> and lived today. In meeting Jaspers, we meet
> the man of our day.[36]

Yet Jaspers is not more widely known for his thinking about religion

in part, at least, because of his own initial and continuing inten-

tion to speak about and for philosophy as an original faith distinct

from and in polar opposition to religious faith. Jaspers never

claimed to be religious in any generally accepted sense. From

his youth until the very end of his life he maintained a simul-

taneously critical and respectful distance from institutional

Christianity, even as he was deeply influenced by the heritage

of "biblical religion" made present to some extent by his own

family, but to a greater extent by his Jewish wife and by his

own personal study.[37] His early writing about religion focuses

upon religion primarily in order to distinguish philosophy

from religion.[38] Only in his later work does religion itself

become a topic of thought and concern where Jaspers seeks "to

promote truth in religion by means of a philosophical critique

of religion."[39] It is in this later work, both as part of his

effort to develop a "philosophical logic" adequate to the new,

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[36]Heinrich Fries, Ist der Glaube ein Verrat am Menschen? Eine Begegnung mit Karl Jaspers (Speyer: Pilger-Verlag, 1950), p. 20.

[37]PA, pp. 76, 78; PSP, pp. 95-103, 112.

[38]Ph I, pp. 296-316; cf. PA, p. 77. For a survey of Jaspers' discussion of religion in his earliest writings, prior to Philosophie, cf. T. J. von Lutz's Reichweite und Grenzen von Karl Jaspers' Stellungnahme zu Religion und Offenbarung (Disser-tation: University of Munich, 1968), pp. 1-45.

[39]Ehrlich, p. 11.

world-historical situation (or global horizon) of thought and as
part of his passionate struggle to preserve the possibility of faith
amidst the terrible crisis of our age, that Jaspers takes up the
question of pluralism and truth in religion.[40]

Thus Jaspers' relation to religious faith is one which grew
gradually throughout his career as he again and again took up the
struggle to come to adequate terms with that other faith which
stood in such a crucial polarity to his own "philosophical faith."
Yet while there clearly is development in Jaspers' understanding
of religion,[41] the controlling elements and basic intentions of
his thought remain constant. Even as he contrasts philosophy
and religion in the early work, his fundamental purpose is to
establish the validity of existential faith (or the truth of
existential relations to transcendence). Philosophy clearly is

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[40]Philosophical Faith and Revelation is, of course, the
basic text in this regard, but it is the culmination of a long
development of thinking about the logic of faith (in Philosophy
and Von der Wahrheit) and about the crisis of the present age
(especially The Origin and Goal of History). While explicit
discussions of religion are to be found in these major works as
well as in numerous articles or chapters of shorter works, the
most readily available summary statements of Jaspers' thought
about religion prior to Philosophical Faith and Revelation are
Der philosophische Glaube (1948, English trans. The Perennial
Scope of Philosophy, especially Chapter 4), Die Frage der
Entmythologisierung (1954, English trans. Myth and Christianity),
and the sections on religion in Jaspers' "Philosophical Auto-
biography" (pp. 75-81) and his "Reply to My Critics" (pp. 777-785)
in P. A. Schilpp, ed., The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers (New York:
Tudor, 1957). N.B., this last mentioned work will hereafter be
referred to simply as "Schilpp."

[41]This is one of the central arguments of Lutz's
dissertation. (Cf. n. 38 above.)

the primary path of such existential transcending, but Jaspers, with all of his severe criticism of religion, stresses that it too is a possible path, faith, and truth.[42] Later, as his thinking became more world-historical and political,[43] this fundamental intention to establish the validity of existential faith takes the form of an effort to delineate a "universal basic knowledge" as a "common framework so broadly based that historically heterogeneous faiths could communicate in it without abandoning themselves" and "could transform themselves by their own depth . . . into the new foundations that human seriousness needs under the conditions of the coming age."[44] Thus the truth of faith might survive the pervasive threat of decay into nihilism, the loss of the great religious and philosophical traditions, by the establishment of a basis upon which these traditions might be affirmed in their multiplicity - - for "the truth of faith lies in the multiplicity of its historical manifestations" and "in the self-encountering of this multiplicity through ever deeper communication."[45] This basis for the affirmation of the plurality of faiths, for their possible preservation in a situation of crisis and for their communication in a situation of convergence, is constituted by Jaspers' analysis of the logic of faith and the logic of existential truth.

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[42]Ph I, p. 301.

[43]PA, pp. 65-69, 81-84; OMP, pp. 135-136.

[44]PFR, p. 88.

[45]OGH, pp. 225-227; cf. pp. 214-215, 221-225.

In sum, then, a distinction can and must be made between Jaspers' faith and his analysis of faith. Jaspers' "philosophical faith," however religious it might seem in its unconditionality and transcendent reference, must clearly be distinguished from the positivity of real religion.[46] This non-religious faith is itself very widespread and typical of the faith of so many contemporaries who stand with Jaspers between a complete rejection of faith, on the one hand, and traditional orthodoxy, on the other.[47] Yet it is Jaspers' analysis of faith, intended to be applicable to religious as well as philosophical faith, which is typical of contemporary thinking about religion in a more fundamental sense. It is this analysis of the logic of faith and truth which crystallized in Jaspers' own thinking in light of the present situation of crisis and convergence and which is taken here as representative of not just a-religious, but also of much religious self-understanding as it has developed in that same situation.

Jaspers' thinking is intentionally typical not simply in the sense already noted that he seeks a common framework adequate to the problems and realities of our age, but insofar as he seeks that common ground not by some radical breakthrough or new departure, but by a self-conscious effort to think within and to recapitulate the dominant themes of Western and contemporary thinking.

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[46] Ph I, p. 296; PA, p. 77; R, p p. 779, 755-6.

[47] Cf., for example, Robert Bellah's essays "Transcendence in Contemporary Piety" and "Between Religion and Social Science" in Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion In A Post-Traditional World (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 196-208, 237-259.

"I see in my thinking," he notes with reference to the "universal
basic knowledge" (Grundgedanke) outlined in the first part of
Von der Wahrheit, "the natural and necessary conclusion of previous
Western thought."[48] Jaspers has always rejected the idea that his
philosophy is something new. "Philosophy can never wish to be
anything but simple, ancient, eternal philosophy."[49] Yet this
effort to be ancient, eternal philosophy occurs today explicitly
within the conditions for thought which are the realities of our
era and not by some effort to transcend those conditions. Thus
Jaspers locates himself clearly and self-consciously within, as
one of the most significant representatives of, the modern,
enlightened tradition of liberal rationality. Kant stands at
the peak of that tradition as the one who most clearly thought
the fundamental conditions of our age. And it is above all Kant
who is Jaspers' mentor and a Kantian understanding of reason and
freedom which are the foundations of his thinking.[50]

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[48]VdW, p. 192. While the claim might seem arrogant on
any terms, Jaspers is not claiming some "Hegelian" synthesis of
all of Western thought. He rejects the possibility of such a
synthesis. His claim, rather, is to be able to provide, at this
juncture in Western history ("standing on the shoulders of giants"),
a critical or methodological framework for the rich and profound
diversity of Western thought -- one which hopes also to be signifi-
cant for the emerging world horizon of thought. Cf. PA, pp. 70-75,
81-84.

[49]RE, p. 153, n. 1.

[50]Ehrlich, p. 210, recounts a conversation with one of
the current professors of philosophy at Basel who referred to
Jaspers as "the first and last Kantian."

Yet the heritage of the Enlightenment has undergone a
deep challenge and crisis since the middle of the last century - -
so much so that Karl Löwith can with justice remark that "we are
all existentialists . . . because we are all more or less caught
in the predicament of being 'modern' by living in an epoch of
dissolution of former beliefs and certainties."[51] Here again,
or still, it is Jaspers' concern to think within and not against
the mainstream of the age - - to think the Western tradition as
appropriated by the Enlightenment within the present crisis of
our history. Kant remains his mentor, but his is a Kantian
thinking drawn taut under the impact of Nietzsche and sharpened by
the influence of Kierkegaard. Reason and freedom (Vernunft und
Existenz) remain the focal points of his thought - - as they
are the dominant realities of our historical situation - - but it
is reason and freedom chastened by the loss of secure foundations,
rootlessness, the ambiguities of scientific technique, and the
unclear prospect of the emerging global era.[52]

Jaspers has always, then, sought to think in a way which
was representative of the mainstream - - not as a passive mirror
of the superficial, but as one who grappled with and thus clarified
the deeper currents. This is equally true for his thinking about

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[51]Karl Löwith, Nature, History, and Existentialism
(Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 31.

[52]These themes are explicitly developed in Jaspers' 1935
lectures published as Vernunft und Existenz (English trans. Reason
and Existenz). Cf. especially lectures one and five. Cf. also
Chapter II of the present study.

religion, both for his general analysis of the logic of faith and for his specific approach to the question of religious pluralism. The fundamental elements of that analysis of the logic and truth of faith reveal the pervasive presence of Kant and Kierkegaard and thus find echoes throughout very much current discussion of religion. Emphasis upon faith with an implied priority of faith over belief and the basic location of religion in subjectivity or immediacy is itself a prime instance of understanding religion within Kant's anthropocentric turn and in terms of Kierkegaard's evocation of Existenz. Similarly Kant's programmatic denial of knowledge "to make room for faith" establishes a polarity of phenomenal and noumenal, objective and transcendent, literal and symbolic which finds comprehensive contemporary expression in Jaspers' thought and is an often unquestioned and seemingly inescapable premise of so much recent discussion of religion.

Jaspers, then, brings these fundamental aspects of his analysis of faith to the current situation of crisis and convergence and provides thereby one of the clearer and more comprehensively thought expressions of the view that the truth of faith allows, even demands real plurality.[53] Already in 1931, writing about the plurality of worldviews in the history of human thought, he described the basic problem raised by such pluralism -- what has above been described as the dilemma of "provincialism" or "cosmopolitanism":

> It seems that there is either one true
> way or the truth is the combination that

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[53]OGH, pp. 226-237.

> links them all, <u>or else there are several</u>
> <u>truths</u>. If there were many exclusive world
> views and all of them were true, the <u>appli-</u>
> <u>cable truth concept would have to differ</u>
> <u>from what we mean by generally valid scien-</u>
> <u>tific truth.</u>[54]

Given such alternatives, Jaspers vigorously rejects the orthodox

or "provincial" claim ("one true way"). It is, in fact, the exclu-

sivist pretensions of revealed religion which eventually came to

occupy a central place in his critique of religion.[55] Yet Jaspers

is equally clear in his rejection of some "cosmopolitan" essence

or amalgam of the various religious faiths ("the combination that

links them all.") Past efforts to find the one truth in the diversity

of religions have resulted not in "authentic truth purified of

historical accident" but in "a collection of abstractions watered

down by rationalism" where "the profound meaning, the poignancy was

lost" and "trivial generalization remained."[56] The remaining

alternative, then, is that more than one religion can be true ("there

are several truths"), but this, as Jaspers notes, means that "the

applicable truth concept would have to differ from what we mean by

generally valid scientific truth." It would be a concept of

"existential truth" which, while unconditional and absolute, remains

always particular and historic, never universal and exclusive.[57]

54Ph I, p. 251. Emphasis added.

55E.g., PSP, pp. 89-96; PFR, p. 342.

56PSP, p. 113. Cf. PW, p. 150; OGH, p. 221.

57PSP, pp. 90-91.

Jaspers' program, then, laid out early in his career and
followed consistently throughout the different shifts and develop-
ments of his thinking, is to argue for the pervasive type of response
to pluralism which admits plurality in its understanding of truth.
His constant goal has been to clarify a common framework of thinking
expressive of the deepest currents of our heritage and present
situation, a framework which would make possible the survival of
multiple faiths in toleration, communication, and truth. Not only
has this goal been central to Jaspers' thinking, but that thinking
itself has always sought to be as comprehensive as possible - - in
the sense of comprehensively open to other faiths and ways of
thinking and, perhaps more significantly, in the sense of a systematic
or comprehensive effort to think through his position from foundations
to implications. Thus a particular advantage of focusing on Jaspers'
discussion of pluralism and truth, and a particular merit of that
discussion, is its comprehensive character. Here is no merely
technical or academic discussion in the philosophy of religion,
but a discussion which is central to a comprehensively-thought
philosophy,[58] a philosophy which itself seeks to grapple comprehen-
sively with the central issues and ideas of our day.

While there are many today who would maintain that different
religions can be equally true because religious truth is unlike
scientific truth, because it is a matter of "faith" and its

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[58] Jaspers himself, agreeing with a critic, notes that
"in a certain sense" his philosophy "does not have a philosophy of
religion," but "is itself philosophy of religion." R, p. 778.

articulations are "symbolic," there are few who have <u>argued</u> that
position by a serious analysis of the logic of religious truth and
a systematic grounding of that logic in firm philosophical founda-
tions. And there are fewer yet for whom that argument is part of
a serious, inescapably political engagement with the destiny of our
humanity in this age of crisis.[59] This is not, of course, to say
. that Jaspers is unique nor even to claim that his analysis of reli-
gious pluralism is necessarily the best or the most profound. Yet
it at least lends plausibility to the claim that Jaspers' clarification
of the truth of faith could be of "pervasive consequence."[60] It is
this plausibility which will be evaluated in what follows.

There is, however, one final note which should be included
in this brief introduction to Jaspers' discussion of religious
pluralism. In his intention to speak to and for a (the?) mainstream
of contemporary thinking, and in his effort to grapple with the
deeper currents of our age, Jaspers comes to be representative not
only of the good, but also, inevitably, of some of the central
problems and conflicts of this troubled age. Moreover, the effort
to think comprehensively leads not to an avoidance or veiling of
those problems, but to even greater clarification. Said another
way, Jaspers' thinking does not avoid the difficulties nor does it

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[59]The confluence of concern about religion, politics, and
a global "philosophical logic" developed gradually for Jaspers. Cf.
the accounting in his own autobiography; PA, pp. 53-81, and the
excellent account in Hans Saner's brief biography <u>Karl Jaspers</u>
(Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1970), pp. 82-113.

[60]Ehrlich, p. 10.

ignore the limitations of the present situation of thought. Rather

it consciously reflects these difficulties as well as the ambiguities,

unresolved questions, and darkness which sometimes result when the

best efforts of thought fall short before them. Thus it simultaneously

(and self-consciously) argues for a particular understanding of

religious pluralism and truth while inviting, even provoking, a

critical but communicative response to that understanding.[61]

3.

To repeat, then, what has been said above about the limited,

specific goal of the present study -- it is to engage in just such

critical struggle with Jaspers' thinking as a way of assessing one

major and representative instance of the view that more than one

religion can be true. Because of the difficulty of the issue and

the complexity of the thinker, it should not be surprising that a

mixed verdict is reached. There is much in Jaspers' thought that

recommends itself as adequate for understanding religious truth and

for coming to grips with the reality of religious pluralism. But

there are also inadequacies in particularly crucial aspects of his

analysis. In sum, then, the thesis to be defended maintains a

tentatively negative answer to the basic question about the

possibility of more than one religion being true. At least in

terms of Jaspers' exposition, it is argued that such a possibility

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[61]PFR, p. 13. The whole of Philosophical Faith and
Revelation is intended as part of a dialogue or, to use Jaspers'
term, a "loving struggle" with the representatives of more
orthodox religious self-understanding.

has not been adequately established.

When seen primarily as an evaluation of Jaspers' thought, this thesis argues that he fails because of a deep ambiguity or tension in his position - - insofar as key aspects of his analysis betray or undercut the explicit intention of his argument - - and because his analysis of the logic of faith, despite much that is helpful, falls short of an adequate understanding of religious reality and truth. Yet his failure is instructive insofar as it illustrates the way in which certain widespread ways of thinking about religion are not only problematic in themselves, but pervert or derail much else that is valuable in that same contemporary appreciation of religion and religious pluralism. When seen, then, as a particular and limited effort to deal with the question of religious truth as it arises in the contemporary situation of pluralism, this thesis argues that the widely held view that more than one religion can be true has serious difficulties insofar as it is explained by the type of thinking found in Jaspers. This view is not established by that type of thinking.

Yet it bears reiteration that this thesis certainly does not provide any final resolution to the general problem of pluralism and truth. Nor does it resolve the specific logical issue which is its particular focus. It argues that a particular way of understanding religious truth is inadequate, but there may yet be more adequate understandings of religious truth which do admit of significant plurality. Furthermore, this thesis does not claim to

offer a complete analysis of Jaspers' philosophy. It is not primarily an argument about the full scope of his idea of existential truth nor an evaluation of his total thought about religion — — although both topics figure heavily in the discussion. It is, rather, simply an attempt to get to the heart of Jaspers' thinking about religious pluralism in order to determine whether that thinking provides a basis for affirming a possible plurality of true religions.

4.

There is, however, one more issue which must be at least touched upon in this introductory chapter, an issue which is raised by the intention to "get to the heart of Jaspers' thinking" on a particular issue. The corpus of Jaspers' work is, simply in terms of size, so massive, with so many different texts and themes bearing on the topic of religious truth, that any attempt at "getting to the heart of the matter" would seem, at least at first glance, to raise methodological difficulties.[62] Those difficulties, moreover,

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[62]While it is true that Philosophical Faith and Revelation is the one work where Jaspers recapitulates the essence of his thinking about religious pluralism, that work itself runs to some three-hundred and sixty closely printed pages (almost five-hundred and fifty in the original German text) and it cannot be read without reference to the original texts of Philosophy (three volumes, nine-hundred pages) and Von der Wahrheit (one-thousand-fifty pages) from which its basic thinking is drawn. In addition there are at least twelve shorter books (as well as various essays) parts of which bear directly on the discussion of religion, and, given the systematic, interconnected character of Jaspers' thinking, an almost unlimited number of discussions throughout the entire corpus which bear at least indirectly on the topic of religious truth and pluralism.

would seem to be significantly increased by particular aspects

of Jaspers' style which reflect his own quite deliberate methodology

and which render attempts at neat summarization not only impossible,

but very wrong-headed. The following are some examples of that

style developed by Jaspers in his search for an adequate form for

written philosophical communication.[63]

> - - Using a language which, in the words of
>   his major translator, "fits the principle
>   of inconclusiveness," Jaspers stresses
>   "primordial words" (such as "idea," "mind,"
>   "world," and "ground") which are "incapable
>   of objective definition" and he leaves
>   almost nothing unqualified by "a stream of
>   meticulous and-yets, whereases, and on-the-
>   other-hands."[64]

> - - He deliberately avoids a rigid set of
>   technical terms. In his own words: "I
>   take great care to avoid too much term-
>   inological precision. Clarity is attained
>   by the movement of thought not by the
>   definition of concepts."[65]

> - - Clarity does not preclude deliberate
>   ambiguity and unresolved (unresolvable)
>   dialectic where truth demands them. Thus
>   Jaspers' thinking continually moves across
>   the hyphen between both-and, simultaneously
>   asserting "yes" and "no" and refusing an
>   illusory finality or synthesis.[66]

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[63]Ph I, pp. 33-34; II, pp. 100-103.

[64]E. B. Ashton, "Translator's Note" to Philosophy,
Vol. I, pp. xiv.

[65]Letter to Jean Wahl dated Nov. 8, 1949, cited in
Jean Wahl, La Pensée de l'Existence (Paris: Flammarion, 1951),
pp. 286-287, n. 1.

[66]Cf. PFR, pp. 112-115. Jaspers speaks of "building
by tearing down what we have built." Ph I, p. xv.

- - The organization of his works is
designedly fluid and open. It allows
for continual circling, a repetition
or re-introduction of themes and ideas
in different contexts and combinations.
There is a pervasive unity, but it is
not a typical beginning-middle-end,
neatly logical unity. It is more
like the movement of a river as it
twists and even turns back upon itself,
receives new impulses, now fast now
gentle, but grows as a whole in depth
and power.[67]

- - While his thinking seeks to present
a comprehensive framework for con-
temporary thought and faith, and while
it is certainly systematic (thorough
and interconnected), it programmatically
rejects the possibility of a rigid,
complete "System."[68] The parts of the
whole, while in basic harmony, are not
cogs which fit neatly together. They
are, rather, each by itself, reflections

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[67]The metaphor is from Xavier Tilliette, Karl Jaspers:
Théorie de la Vérité; Métaphysique des Chiffres; Foi Philoso-
phique (Paris: Aubier, 1960), p. 7. Ehrlich (p. 1) suggests
a more mechanical metaphor: "We meet more or less recurring
methods and methodologies, concerns and conceptions, distinctions
and syntheses which, functioning as sources of disquiet much in
the manner of horologic balances, move and direct the structure."
One is also reminded at times of Wittgenstein's famous metaphor
about "criss-crossing in every direction" over a wide field of
thought in the course of his philosophical journeyings. Cf.
Philosophical Investigations (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963),
p. vii.

[68]VdW, pp. 911-912; OMP, pp. 157-158. Jaspers criticizes
what he recognizes to be one of the best interpretations of his
thought, the work of Dufrenne and Ricoeur, for being "too clear,"
for "reducing his work to a rigid framework." Cf. Jaspers'
"Preface" to M. Dufrenne and P. Ricoeur, Karl Jaspers et la
Philosophie de l'Existence (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1947),
p. 7. Cf. also the remark attributed to Jaspers in Sebastian
Samay, Reason Revisited: The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers (Dublin:
Gill and Macmillan, 1971), p. 257.

on a particular issue or topic,
movements of thought which attain
a relative completeness.[69]

There can be, then, no adequate summary of Jaspers' thought[70]
because, as he insists repeatedly, living philosophy is not a set
of doctrines, but a movement of thinking. Ideas, thought structures,
and teachings are necessary, "but the point of reference lies not
in the doctrine itself, but in the possible goal of the motion."[71]
It is not, cannot be a fixed or final set of doctrines because the
"possible goal of the motion" is, as we shall see, ever-ungraspable
transcendence. The purpose of philosophical communication, then,
is the communication of a movement of thinking, a communication which
is possible only insofar as it enables the reader/hearer to enter
into the movement itself. In Jaspers' striking metaphor, that
personal ("existential") participation is like "the beating of the
other wing.without which the contents of the text - - the beating
of the first wing - - cannot bring about the upswing of fulfilled
meaning."[72] "Philosophical truth," in other words, "can be

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[69]PA, p. 39. What Jaspers says here regarding the individual
chapters of Philosophy is equally true for all of his books.

[70]As if to frustrate the desire for such a summary, Jaspers
has himself, especially on the occasion of public lectures, given
several "summaries" of his thinking, each different from the others
and each involving the stylistic characteristics just noted. Cf.
Philosophy of Existence (1937 lectures); The Perennial Scope of
Philosophy (1947 lectures); Way to Wisdom (1950 lectures); and
Philosophy is for Everyman (1964 lectures).

[71]Ph I, p. 18. Cf. I, p. 34: "If anything has been
accomplished in this Philosophy it is not an expoundable doctrine,
but a movement of thought. . . . a movement to be entered into if
one is to understand its meaning."

[72]Ph I, p. 16.

communicated only in indirect thought-movements and cannot adequately be captured in any proposition."[73] It is the purpose of Jaspers' stylistic or methodological peculiarities to effect such indirect communication, to stimulate or involve that movement of thinking even as they frustrate the ever-present desire for a fixed, secure system or doctrine by leaving the contents of thought ever "in suspension" (Schwebend).[74]

Thus while there must be fidelity to Jaspers' text, a simple material reproduction or attempted summary of the text will not "go to the heart" of his thinking. If more than such external reproduction is necessary for the interpretation of any thinker of stature, it is doubly necessary for someone (like Jaspers) who programmatically or methodically distinguishes the conceptual apparatus from the intended movement of thought.[75] The alternative to merely external reproduction is the effort to think into and with (as well as against) Jaspers on a selected number of themes related to the central topic under investigation. In terms of such interpretative thinking there are, as James Collins notes, "several highways leading to the heart of Karl Jaspers' thought."[76] The path or outline of topics chosen here to elucidate Jaspers' thinking

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[73]PA, p. 70.

[74]Ehrlich (p. 22) refers to Jaspers' style as "invocatory" thinking while Tilliette (p. 41) speaks of "la methode incantatoire de Jaspers."

[75]Cf. Bernard Welte, La Foi Philosophique chez Jaspers et Saint Thomas d'Aquin (Desclee de Brouwer, 1958), pp. 19-20, 16-17.

[76]James Collins, "Jaspers on Science and Philosophy" in Schilpp, p. 115.

about religious pluralism is not found as such in any of Jaspers'
works. It does not attempt to cover in detail all of the themes
relevant to Jaspers' thought about religious truth, nor does it
attempt to survey all of the texts relevant to the themes covered.
Rather by focusing on a series of key topics, using selected texts,
it attempts a series of probes, so to speak, each adding to a
growing "feel" for the heart or nerve of Jaspers' approach to the
question of pluralism and truth.[77] In the end, of course, the
emphasis will shift from thinking into and with to thinking
against Jaspers in the effort to evaluate his contribution. Yet
that, too, is essential if one's own method is to remain faithful
to the spirit and method of Jaspers' thinking.

The series of topics chosen as a path into the heart of
Jaspers' thinking about religious pluralism and truth can be listed
here, then, by way of conclusion to this introductory chapter and
as an outline of the movement of thought through succeeding chapters.
Chapter II details Jaspers' own understanding of the problem of
pluralism and truth by examining his analysis of the crisis of our
age and the new world horizon of convergence. Discussion focuses not
only upon the problem as it emerged in this situation, but also upon
what Jaspers regards as the new conditions governing thought about
the problem which have become normative for this situation. In

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[77]Such interpretation inevitably involves a transformation
of the original into one's own thinking and the risk that what
results is more interpretation than Jaspers. The risk is unavoid-
able. Cf. Welte, p. 16.

Chapter III Jaspers' foundational thinking (Grundgedanke) about
and within those governing conditions is presented as the basis
for all of his thinking about faith and truth. This foundation
is itself a transcending thinking which culminates in the
possibility of faith, the possible (existential) affirmation
of transcendence, and thus the first clarification of the notion
of existential truth. Chapter IV then examines in greater detail
aspects of Jaspers' thought (on historicity, communication, and
ciphers) which clarify the relevance of this understanding of
existential truth to the concrete particularity and plurality
of religious truth. Finally in Chapter V the adequacy of Jaspers'
understanding of truth as a basis for the possible affirmation of
a plurality of true religions is evaluated.

THE CRISIS OF OUR AGE AND
THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND TRUTH

> During the last few centuries . . . a
> single phenomenon that is intrinsically
> new in all respects has made its
> appearance: science with its consequences
> in technology. It has revolutionized the
> world inwardly and outwardly as no other
> event since the dawn of recorded history.
> It has brought with it unprecedented
> opportunities and hazards. The techno-
> logical age, in which we have been
> living for a bare century and a half,
> has only achieved full dominion during
> the last few decades; this dominion
> is now being intensified to a degree
> whose limits cannot be foreseen. We
> are, as yet, only partially aware of
> the prodigious consequences. New
> foundations for the whole of existence
> have now been inescapably laid.[1]

The problem of religious pluralism and truth which was

outlined in the preceding chapter must now be surveyed again,

this time in terms of the details of Jaspers' particular way

of conceiving the problem. To put the matter simply, if Jaspers'

proposed resolution of the problem is to be understood and

evaluated, there must first be clarity about what, specifically,

he understands the problem to be. His analysis of the problem,

moreover, is itself a not unimportant part of the contribution

which he makes toward thought about the question of religious

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[1]OGH, p. 61.

pluralism. The primary purpose of the present chapter, then, shall be to present and discuss Jaspers' understanding of the problem of pluralism and truth. Secondarily, of course, this presentation will serve as an introduction to some of the key themes which recur in Jaspers' thinking and to some critical questions which must be posed concerning that thinking.

After (1) some introductory reflections on the setting of Jaspers' analysis of the problem, the chapter will concentrate on (2) Jaspers' analysis of the crisis of our age and (3) the significance of that analysis for the problem of religious pluralism. The chapter will close with (4) some brief critical questions.

1.

The full scope and poignancy of Jaspers' conceptualization of the problem is to be found not so much in his "systematic" works as in his writings on history - - those writings which in a variety of ways are an attempt to understand the unique and critical character of the present age in world-history.[2] For Jaspers sees the problem of pluralism and truth not as some isolated puzzle, but as one part of what can be called "the crisis of our age." It is only within this general crisis that the problem of religious

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[2]There are two major writings, Die geistige Situation der Zeit (1931, English trans. Man in the Modern Age) and Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte (1949, English trans. The Origin and Goal of History), along with various essays and sections in other works.

pluralism arises in its modern form, and thus the full extent
of Jaspers' understanding of the problem of religious truth can
best be grasped within the framework of his analysis of the more
general crisis. In fact, as one commentator has justly observed,
Jaspers' sensitive attention to the radical novelty of the present
age is "the vital soul, the explicit presupposition . . . upon
which the great arch of his philosophy is constructed."[3] Thus it
is not simply useful or helpful to begin a discussion of Jaspers'
philosophy of religion in terms of his historical analysis of the
present crisis; it is a necessary starting point. In·the words
of Hannah Arendt, one of Jaspers' most distinguished pupils, "it
is against this background of political and spiritual realities
of which Jaspers is more aware than probably any other philosopher
of our time, that one must understand . . . the presuppositions of
his philosophy."[4]

A brief clarification of this necessity may be useful,
both to avoid misunderstanding and to provide a context for discussion
of Jaspers' writings on the present age. The necessity of this
starting point does not derive from the historicist cliché that a
thinker can be understood only in the light of his times. Nor does
it derive simply from the fact, true in itself, that an understanding
of the historical situation which occasioned and shaped a man's

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[3]Tilliette, p. 61.

[4]Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World" in
Schilpp, p. 541. Emphasis added.

thinking frequently provides a reliable path toward an adequate interpretation of that thinking. Rather, Jaspers' thought on the problem of religious truth must be seen in terms of his understanding of the present age because the former grows out of and is inseparably related to the latter. Put in general terms, for Jaspers what might be called the "philosophical" is inseparable from the "historical" or the "political." Since he first published his three volume Philosophie simultaneously with Die geistige Situation der Zeit, his writings have always been concerned both with the technical matters and perennial questions of philosophy and with the social, cultural, and intellectual realities of the present age. As noted in the preceding chapter, his attempt has continually been to think perennial issues within the unique reality of the present.[5]

Failure to take cognizance of the shock of events and the deep challenges to thought which the real history of our era forces upon us is precisely what renders much merely academic philosophy existentially irrelevant — — just so much scholarly trivia or lofty, but empty theory. In contrast to such philosophy, Jaspers sought to return to a more classical sense of theory which refuses the distinction of theory and politics, which sees the political as a matter "of central significance" for philosophical thinking.[6]

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[5]Cf., for example, the opening paragraphs of his massive theoretical work Von der Wahrheit, pp. 1-2.

[6]PA, p. 70.

Such thinking always "starts with our situation"[7] - -
not only with general consideration of the situatedness of all
thought, but with specific consideration of the realities of
this concrete situation.

> We must remain aware of our epoch
> and our situation. A modern philosophy
> cannot develop without elucidating its
> roots in time and in a particular place.[8]

Yet such thinking is not "timely" or "existentially relevant"
as a superficial reflection of the age, an identification of
philosophy and history, of _Geist_ and _Zeitgeist_. In terms of
such faddish existentialism parading its relevance as
significant thought, Jaspers' philosophy has always been
"untimely - - untimely from the start, untimely in principle"
because its goal is "to bring to mind what has an ultimately
timeless meaning."[9]

> Even though we are subject to the
> conditions of our epoch, it is not
> from these conditions that we draw
> our philosophy . . . . We must not
> adjust our potentialities to the low
> level of our age, not subordinate
> ourselves to our epoch, but attempt,
> by elucidating the age, to arrive
> at the point where we can live out

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[7]Ph I, pp. 43-45.

[8]WW, p. 108. Jaspers argues this point at length and
with detailed reference to the present situation of the West in
Reason and Existenz, especially Chapter I ("The Origin of the
Contemporary Philosophical Situation") and Chapter V ("Possibili-
ties for Contemporary Philosophizing").

[9]Ph I, pp. 11-12. Cf. RE, p. 152, n. 1.

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of our primal source.[10]

Thus Jaspers' position characteristically mediates between two extremes: the historicist identification of philosophy and history and the claim to timeless truth by those scholastic metaphysicians for whom history is essentially irrelevant.[11] Both the reality and limiting conditions of the present, which must be taken seriously if thought is to be significant and responsible, and the goal of thinking the eternally true within those limiting conditions are essential characteristics of philosophical thinking. In this sense the task of philosophy is always a hermeneutic one. It is the task of re-appropriating past traditions of thought in terms of present realities, yet always in an effort to attain the never finally graspable eternal source and goal of all history and thought.[12]

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[10] WW, p. 108. Emphasis added. Here is the full meaning of the point made in the preceding chapter that Jaspers' thought seeks to be typical of our age "in the best sense."

[11] As the formulations cited above indicate, this mediation consists of an endlessly dialectical movement between the extremes, and not in some supposed ("Hegelian") synthesis. The latter, as Hegel knew, would only be possible at the end of history - - an end which Jaspers clearly does not claim. RE, p. 48.

[12] RE, pp. 135-137. Jaspers' understanding of the historicity of thought and truth will be developed in detail in Chapter IV, yet even in the present brief discussion there is a clear indication of the way in which Jaspers thinks within modern historical consciousness in recognizing relativity (and thus plurality) while still affirming truth. The extremes which he rejects, on the other hand, would, each in its own way, dissolve the problem of plurality and truth - - the historicist claim by recognizing plurality but negating truth, the metaphysical claim by affirming one truth and denying plurality.

Such mediation is, Jaspers would argue, imperative today because of the critical character of the present situation. On the one hand, the very tumult and confusion of the present make it tempting for thought to seek secure refuge in recourse to time-less truths or the mechanical repetition of past verities. On the other hand, the radical break with the past ("the most profound caesura in history to date"[13]) which is at the root of such confusion makes it equally tempting to reject the past entirely in the name of a thinking more relevant (and true) to a totally new era in human history. For Jaspers, however, it is crucial that both temptations be resisted. The entire effort of his thought, and especially his extensive studies in the history of philosophy,[14] can be understood as a passionate effort to make possible a re-appropriation of the great heritage of human thought and belief within the radically new conditions of the present. He had nothing but scorn for those deluded romantics who believe

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[13] EH, pp. 35-36.

[14] The two published volumes on The Great Philosophers as well as individual studies and numerous articles on other thinkers are only a part of a projected, but never completed, "world history of philosophy" which was to encompass the thought of both East and West and to contribute, thereby, to the foundations of the coming era of global history. Cf. Hans Saner's report "Zu Karl Jaspers Nachlass" in Saner, ed., Karl Jaspers in Der Discussion (Munich: R. Piper and Co. Verlag, 1973), pp. 455-459, on the scope and complexity of this project which occupied Jaspers for about twenty-five years and which covers more than twenty-two thousand pages (!) of notes and manuscripts in his literary estate.

that humanity can arise anew only when the rubble of the past had been swept away.[15] "The idea of progress" was, as Golo Mann notes, "foreign to him."[16] Yet the crisis of the present age _is_ real and radical. The need to re-appropriate the past arises from the changed situation; the difficulty of the task from the radical character of that change. "The old world is lost for good; we must try to cling to memories across a chasm."[17] "It is impossible to return to a fancied past and to withdraw from the fundamental conditions of the age."[18] Serious thought cannot escape, but must come to grips with those new conditions.

2.

For Jaspers, then, the crisis of our age is the inescapable context for thought about religious truth. Yet this crisis itself is no simple, univocal thing which can be neatly described and clearly understood. In fact we cannot understand the crisis as a whole, with "scientific" clarity, because of its complexity, but even more because it is _our_ crisis -- both as a situation within which we stand (and not something we can contemplate from the outside or after its completion) and, even more significantly, an

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[15]Cf. OGH, p. 233.

[16]Golo Mann, "Freedom and The Social Sciences" in Schilpp, p. 559.

[17]EH, p. 61.

[18]Mann, p. 557.

a crisis of our self-understanding (a loss of familiar signposts, an uncharted course).[19] We can and must, however, take our bearings in the light both of what can be known with cogent clarity and of what can be intimated from the deepest sources of our humanity.[20]

In some senses, of course, many periods of history can be regarded as critical turning points, periods of darkness in the dissolution of one culture and the struggle for the emergence of something new. There is, moreover, a perennial temptation to regard one's own time as the crucial point in history. For Jaspers, however, the present age does constitute a unique dividing line, a radical upheaval and a revolutionary turning point in human history as a whole - - "the most profound caesura in human history to date." It is a period unparalleled in human memory, an "Age of Technology" which might be compared only with that hypothetical "Promethean Age", when the discovery of the tool set in motion the millennia-long process whereby the foundations of the great ancient civilizations and of (recorded) history were laid.[21] It is, moreover, the end of such history as the separate histories of different civilizations and the de facto beginning of global or world history in the "single unit of communications"

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[19]For Jaspers' strictures against such total knowledge, strictures which apply equally to his own analysis, cf. MMA, pp. 26-30 and OGH, pp. 267-268.

[20]What follows is not an attempt to touch on all aspects of Jaspers' analysis of the present age, but to elucidate the center of that analysis particularly as it bears upon the question of religious truth and pluralism.

[21]OGH, pp. 81, 97; MMA, pp. 22-23; PFR, p. 29.

constituted by modern technology.[22]

The present age is most evidently a "crisis" in the
popular connotation of the word. It is a break, a separation,
and thus an end and a loss. Jaspers describes the break as
"monstrous" and as "disastrous" in its first effects.[23] "It
is a period of catastrophic descent to poverty of spirit, of
humanity, love and creative energy . . . as if the spirit itself
has been sucked into the technological process."[24] Men have lost
their bearings. The spread of industrial technology, the advent
of the world-wide factory transforming all of society and humanity
itself, has "deprived man of all roots. He is becoming a dweller
on earth with no home."[25] "He still lives among stage props left
from other times, but they have ceased to set the stage for his
life."[26] The supposed liberation from old needs and received
structures has proven less a liberation than a levelling, reduction,
and loss. Jaspers summarizes this initial, destructive aspect
of the present crisis by noting two interrelated facts: 1) the
emergence of the masses from the destruction of communities and
peoples, and 2) the dissolution of traditions in the "melting pot

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[22]OGH, p. 24.

[23]OGH, pp. 125, 98.

[24]OGH, pp. 96-97.

[25]OGH, pp. 98-99. Cf. pp. 111, 122-123; PPR, p. 314.

[26]MH, p. 66.

of nihilism."[27] Thus, ironically, there has been a terrible
"loss of reality in an age of apparently heightened realism."[28]

Yet the crisis is a turning point - - not simply a
turning _from_, but also a turning _to_. What is to come is not clear.
It cannot be clear since it is not something determined by the
"forces of history" or the "cunning of reason," but a matter of
freedom and destiny. It is clear, however, that humanity stands
at a crossroads of terrible significance, and certain aspects of
that crossroads are visible. It is above all a crossroads before
which humanity _as a whole_ stands. For with the universal spread
of science and technology - - the levelling of local and regional
differences, the forced unification of the world through economic
relations, communications, and the technology of total war - -
comes the emergence of a world situation for the first time in
human history. Explicit and compelling convergence has replaced
the isolation and merely relative or implicit unifications of
previous history. It now conditions all thought and action.
"Today, for the first time, there is a real unity of mankind
which consists in the fact that nothing essential can happen
anywhere that does not concern all."[29] The radical break with
the past is not, then, just a "decline of the West." It is a
world-wide phenomenon. The West, so to speak, not only united

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[27] 6CH, pp. 127-134, 266.

[28] PE, p. 4.

[29] OGH, p. 139. Cf. pp. 193-213.

the world by exporting its technology, but simultaneously
"exported to the four corners of the earth its process of
disintegration."[30] Yet the crisis, which in the West developed
gradually over centuries and from within the matrix of Western
thought and belief, broke in the non-Western world with sudden
fury as an attack from without at the deepest foundations of
the fabric of life and thought. And this fact has only intensified
the radically critical character of the present crossroads.[31]
"The whole of mankind . . . all the old cultures have been drawn
into this one common stream of destruction or renewal."[32] For
that, in essence, is the crossroads - - destruction or renewal;
the loss of humanity itself as we know it in the reduction of
existence to a totalitarian life-order (a "universal and homo-
geneous state") or the possible emergence of the substance of our
humanity in new forms adequate to the new conditions of existence.[33]

Jaspers' understanding of this crossroads is nowhere more
fully developed than in the context of the "schema of world
history" which integrates his philosophy of history.[34] As he

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[30]Arendt, p. 540.

[31]PFR, pp. 30-32.

[32]OGH, p. 138. Cf. OMP, p. 138.

[33]OGH, pp. 141-228, esp. pp. 214-219; PFR, pp. 286-320.
This is the theme of the already-cited and incisive article by
Hannah Arendt (in Schilpp, pp. 539-549). Cf. also Jürgen Habermas,
"Die Gestalten Der Wahrheit" in Saner, ed., Karl Jaspers in der
Diskussion, pp. 309-316.

[34]OGH, passim; cf. esp. pp. 22-26, 71-87; and WW, pp. 96-104.

himself stresses, thoughts about the present age "acquire their full weight as elements of a total conception of history."[35] Such a "total conception" cannot, as already noted, attain the status of compelling knowledge. It is rather a sketch, based upon the most extensive factual knowledge, which seeks orientation in history toward the whole, the origin and goal, the unity and meaning of history, and thus elucidates the dangers and possibilities of the present.[36] Jaspers' schema is itself, then, a product or manifestation of the present crisis, both insofar as it represents an attempt to take bearings within the darkness and confusion of the age and insofar as it attempts to present a vision of history adequate not only for the West, but for all of mankind in the coming global era.[37]

The first and perhaps most significant task of the schema, then, is the determination of an axis of history which is truly universal -- "a fact capable of being accepted as such by all men" and thus capable of providing a common basis for a common or convergent future.[38] The Christian axis which has dominated Western understanding of history is not adequate, for

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[35]EH, p. 35.

[36]Cf. OGH, pp. xiii-xvi, 267-268.

[37]It also illustrates in a particularly forceful way the extent to which Jaspers himself shares in that critical/ historical (his critics would say historicist) consciousness which is so pivotal or crucial to the inner core of the crisis.

[38]OGH, p. 1.

"the Christian faith is only one faith, not the faith of mankind."[39]
Nor can the axis be founded on any other particular faith if it
is to provide a common basis for the future communication of a
plurality of faiths.[40] It is to be found, rather, in the empirical
facts of history as such, "around 500 B.C., in the spiritual process
which occurred between 800 and 200 B.C."[41] This "Axial Period"
(Achsenzeit) and with it the idea of a unity to world history is
clearly visible to us because we stand outside of the history
which flows from it. We stand, in other words, within the second
great turning point around which Jaspers' schema is built - -
the radical turning which is the crisis of our age and which we
cannot know fully because we are still within it. For Jaspers,
then, the schema of "the history of mankind visible to us" has
two foci:

> The first led from the Promethean Age via
> the ancient civilizations to the Axial Period
> and its consequences. The second started
> with the scientific-technological, the new
> Promethean Age.[42]

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[39]OGH, p. 1.

[40]It will be evident that Jaspers' conception of a
universal axis contains already in germ the whole of his thinking
on religious pluralism. It is a tribute to the power (or seductive-
ness?) of his vision that it has become commonplace in much
contemporary thought and particularly in thought about the question
of religious pluralism. Cf., for instance, Hick, God and the
Universe of Faiths, pp. 134 ss. and Dunne, pp. 136-137.

[41]OGH, p. 1.

[42]OGH, p. 25.

All that is commonly referred to as "pre-history" and "history" (prior to "world history") is encompassed by that first focal point, leading to and flowing from the peak of the Axial Period. The long, shadowy development of pre-history (the hypothetical Promethean Age) and the early stages of recorded history - - or the separate histories of the three great centers of culture in what we now call China, India, and Europe together with the Near Orient - - led to the plateau of the great ancient civilizations. These in turn established the pre-conditions in economic, political, intellectual, and religious life for the Axial Period. In fact it is precisely in their breakdown, in the chaos of invasions and the long instability of transitions that there occurs, simultaneously yet separately within the three great cultural spheres, a brief moment, so to speak, of earth-shaking lucidity which transforms the spiritual consciousness of humanity.[43] It is a breakthrough which gives that consciousness a form and shape which has since been normative for all of human history, indeed for the very idea of humanity. And it is this spiritual

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[43]This is not to say that those who lived before, or who live outside the scope of this breakthrough in the three spheres are somehow excluded from truth. For Jaspers the substance and truth of human existence can be attained and lived in the most diverse forms, however "primitive" (prior to or outside the axis of history) or "secular" (subsequent to a loss of the axial heritage). It is to say, however, that the awareness and expression given to that substance in the "three great cultural spheres" during the Axial Period has in fact been decisive for the course of human history and is crucial for the present situation.

normativeness which enables Jaspers to find the axis of history
in the transitional period, from 800 to 200 B.C., between two
great ages of empire.[44]

In more concrete terms, Jaspers describes the Axial
Period as a concentration of "the most extraordinary events":

> Confucius and Lao-tse were living in China,
> all the schools of Chinese philosophy came
> into being . . . India produced the Upani-
> shads and Buddha and, like China, ran the whole
> gamut of philosophical possibilities . . .
> in Iran Zarathustra taught . . . in Palestine
> the prophets made their appearance, from
> Elijah by way of Isaiah to Jeremiah to
> Deutero-Isaiah, Greece witnessed the appearance
> of Homer, of the philosophers - - Parmenides,
> Heraclitus and Plato - - of the tragedians.[45]

Yet aside from such reference to individuals and the events
or writings which expressed their existence and thought, Jaspers'
discussion of the common element, the content of the Axial Period - -
what it is that makes it an axis for history - - is vague, more
evocative than descriptive, and deliberately so. For "the break-
through" was always local breakthroughs occurring separately and

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[44]The idea that insight or truth is touched in situations
of crisis, at the limits or boundaries when all securities have
fallen away, is central to Jaspers' understanding of existential
truth. Cf. OGH, p. 243.

[45]OGH, p. 2. By a similar, yet more telescopic
delineation of the Axial Period (one which includes the origin
of the Christian era as the extension of Jewish prophecy), Jaspers
points to those "paradigmatic individuals" who emerged to express
what is basic and ultimate to human existence and who stand,
each uniquely different, at the very heart of their respective
traditions: Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus. Cf. GP:F,
Part I.

uniquely in each of the three great spheres of the human spirit. More than that, however, it was in each case something which, precisely as a "breakthrough" in awareness - - as a "transcending" awareness of the origin and ground, and thereby of the limits of human existence - - precluded universal and dogmatic expression. Thus even if today, on the other side of the chasm and faced with possible convergence, we sense hints and guesses of a common content, the expressible contents of the axial heritage nonetheless remain clearly distinct and often in opposition.[46]

For Jaspers, then, what emerges in the chaos and upheaval of transition is an awakening in which the mythic and hitherto unreflected substance of humanity is transformed by lucid consciousness of origin and ground.[47] It is a transformation expressed in the great world philosophies and religions which emerge at this time. Common to all is a wonder and openness and questioning which plunges to the source or (to shift the image) seeks transcending comprehension of the whole. Common to all is a purity of passion and reason wrestling with the fundamental human situation. And common to all (to use Jaspers' most characteristic term) is faith. Yet this awakening, transforming, transcending faith is not one but many. In itself inexpressible,

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[46]As John Hicks notes, it is above all at the level of "differences in the key or revelatory experiences that unify a stream of religious experience or thought" that "the largest difficulty in the way of religious agreement" is found. Philosophy of Religion, pp. 127-128.

[47]Cf. OGH, pp. 2-6, 54-57.

it becomes the concrete faiths which give form and shape to
subsequent (and separate) histories.[48]

The histories which flow from the Axial Period, histories
conditioned by the consolidation of new empires and the spread of
faiths, are histories of remarkable organic unities - - the great
traditions in their continual flux of stagnation and renewal.
They have endured until the present as the great matrices of
human life. Yet it is precisely their authority and thus their
ability to sustain humanity which is today everywhere in decline.
For during the course of Western history, from roots peculiar to
the West, conditions were gradually established for the emergence
of something critically new, for that crisis which consitutes the
second turning point in Jaspers' scheme of world history.[49]

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[48] The tantalizing vagueness or ambiguity of this discussion
of the content of the axial breakthrough is Jaspers' own and it is,
as noted above, deliberate. On the one hand the very idea of a
single axis, and continual use of words like "breakthrough,"
"lucid awareness," and "faith" all suggest an ascertainable common
content. Yet this Jaspers denies even though he is aware that
talk of an "inexpressible unity" is logically contradictory. On
the other hand he clearly wants to suggest something far more
profound than a merely formal similarity of certain accidentally
simultaneous transitions in major world cultures. Such would not
constitute an axis for world history and a common basis for
future communication. The difficulty here, of course, is the
central difficulty in the question of religious pluralism and
truth.

[49] It was already noted, but deserves reiteration, that
the two "turning points" are not parallel. The present is no
new Axial Period. It seems, rather, almost a reversal of the
Axial Period. Its rough parallel is the hypothetical Promethean
Age and thus it admits the possibility of a future or second
Axial Period (just as it admits the possibility of a total
night of nihilism or some transformed reappropriation of the
first axial heritage). OGH, p. 25.

The specific origins of the present crisis are manifold
and finally, as with all real novelty, enigmatic. Jaspers traces
its roots in Western religion, Greek rationality, and a restless
dynamism which has characterized Western history (in contrast with
the relative stability and unhistoric character of the East).[50]
Its more proximate origins, however, are to be found in those
events beginning in the late Middle Ages and continuing, as if
in a series of waves, "a flood that has repeatedly risen and
threatened to overwhelm us," until the nineteenth century when a
definitive break within the continuity of Western history was
effected.[51] A central thread in those events, that which is
specifically new and effective in the break, is the rise of
modern science and technology.[52] And with the spread of modern
technology on the tides of missionary activity, colonial expansion,
capitalist enterprise, and world war the break was no longer
Western but world-wide.

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[50]OGH, pp. 57, 59, 62-66, 74-75, 88-93.

[51]GP:O, p. 250; OGH, p. 75.

[52]Clearly for Jaspers the rise of modern science and
technology is that which "brought about the tremendous crisis."
Yet he resists speaking of it as "the cause" because "the origin
of the crisis cannot be apprehended in a single cause" but "in
the infinite web of material and spiritual interconnections of
historical change," and because the origins of modern science
and technology (themselves closely connected, yet distinct
and causally related) are also multiple, complex, and finally
enigmatic. Cf. OGH, pp. 135, 103-105, 88-93. Thus while
science and technology are more immediate causes of the present
crisis, "the spiritual movements that led up to ourselves began
long before the world was altered by technology." OGH, pp. 135-
136.

Consciousness of epochal change, itself a fundamental element of that change, has likewise grown gradually throughout the modern era.[53] Seen initially as a return (whether to primitive Christianity or to classical antiquity) and then as triumphal "Progress," the change was first understood as a critical rupture, a definitive break, in the last century - - and then by two solitary thinkers, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, whose voices went largely unheard until the storm had already broken in the tragic fury of first one and then a second yet more terrible world war.[54] It was they who saw that with Hegel something had come to an end. The traditions which had held men for millennia - - growing from Athens and Jerusalem and merging in Christendom - - were passing, indeed past. Christendom is dead, said the one; God is dead, the other. They saw (foresaw) not a revolutionary leap forward, but a time of darkness, the loss of all footholds and bearings, the chaos of shrill voices and the stupefied drudgery of mass life - - the endless round of production and consumption-in the twin cults of performance and pleasure. Yet their importance rests not alone, not even primarily on their sense of crisis, their dramatic ability

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[53] MHA, pp. 4-15.

[54] On Jaspers' analysis of the significance of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche for our era, cf. RE, Chapter I and the articles "The Importance of Kierkegaard" and "The Importance of Nietzsche, Marx, and Kierkegaard in the History of Philosophy." For Jaspers' view on the way in which two wars have rudely awakened us to their truth, cf. his short treatise The European Spirit.

to shock us from the dogmatic slumber of thinking that the past
can be continued with but slight adjustments. It rests, rather,
on the depth of their understanding of the nature of the crisis.
Perhaps better said, _their_ sense of crisis was no mere external
sense of alarm, but a profound understanding of what the present
has become. They are radically different from each other, share
no common doctrine, and indeed teach no systematic doctrine at
all. Yet in two ways they go together to the heart of that turning
which constitutes the inner movement of the present: 1) in their
relentless _criticism_ of the pretensions of reason (their sense of
history's pervasive relativizing and of humanity's endlessly self-
deluding construction of absolutes) and 2) in their ultimate
recourse to individuality and _freedom_ when all foundations and
horizons have been criticized, relativized, "seen through."

An image utilizing the spatial contrast of "outside"
and "inside" may serve here to clarify and crystallize Jaspers'
understanding of this second great turning point in his schema
of world history.[55] The crisis is a turning from past to future
over the crossroad of the present. Seen from the outside this
turning is the radical breakup of cultures, the end of an epoch
of human history. It is the decline of authorities, hierarchies,
structures, forms of life - - the dissolution of those organic
wholes, communities and traditions, which have formed and sustained

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[55]The image and interpretation, while my own, are
suggested by Jaspers: OGH, pp. 139-140; PSP, p. 159.

political and social and religious life for more than two-thousand years. The pivot, so to speak, upon which this turning moves is the emergence of science and technology as something radically new and compelling. Yet the crisis would be seriously misunderstood were it seen as something simply, or even primarily economic or political or social. Rather the development of modern science and technology and the subsequent rending of the once unified fabric of social life are fundamentally incomprehensible apart from radical changes in thought and belief. The crisis cannot be understood from the outside alone, as something external. It must be grasped from the inside, as a crisis of the human spirit, as "the great metamorphosis of humanity into which we are all being pressed."[56] This is not to suggest that changes in the realm of the spirit (the "ideological superstructures") are the most telling consequences of basic (technical, "substructural") changes. Rather the crisis itself is fundamentally one of the spirit.[57] Modern science and technology are not something external to man, but emerge from and are themselves part of a radical change in human consciousness.[58] The crisis, then, in its deepest sense is an "anthropocentric

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[56]OGH, p. 77. Emphasis added.

[57]To say this, however, is not to replace a materialist theory of causality with an idealist one. Jaspers, as already noted, follows his mentor Max Weber in rejecting all monocausal explanation in history. Cf. MMA, pp. 15-17.

[58]As noted above, "the spiritual movements that led up to ourselves began long before the world was altered by technology." OGH, pp. 135-136.

turn."[59] And the pivot upon which this ("inside") turning moves is the development, in various ways, of critical (historical, relativizing) consciousness.

Thus while the Axial Period was a profound transformation of human consciousness in the lucid emergence of faith, this second great turning point is also a profound transformation of consciousness. It is an emergence not of faith, but of critical consciousness — — a shift in the foundations of consciousness an conditions of the possibility of faith. The substance of our humanity at stake in this turning is still faith (or its absence), but it is no longer present "out there," secured on metaphysical foundations and enshrined in dogmatic formulations. Rather, if faith is to be at all, it must be realized within new conditions, within that shift which is the inner core of the present crisis.

Of course the factors which have contributed to and make up this shift in human consciousness are many and Jaspers typically resists any neat formula or single theme.[60] It has

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[59]The phrase suggests the typical sense of a turning to man, but also, and consequently, a turning or change in man.

[60]At one point Jaspers speaks of "the two streams" of modern thought which determine our present situation, one which flows from the natural sciences and a second which is constituted by modern (critical) philosophy. Cf. "The Importance of Nietzsche, Marx, and Kierkegaard in The History of Philosophy," p. 229. Jaspers, as scientist and philosopher, claims to draw from both streams. It is clear, however, that his own understanding of the new conditions governing life and thought are a distillation of that critical shift in thinking which has been effected at least since Descartes and above all by Kant. Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, as noted, awaken us to what has actually happened in that thinking.

already been noted that endless criticism and the recourse to
freedom in the thought of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche "go to the
heart of the present crisis," and the shift has been described as
an "anthropocentric turn," an "emergence of critical (historical,
relativizing) consciousness." Yet the meaning of those descriptive
terms needs further elucidation.[61]

The development of modern science is, of course, always
central to Jaspers' thinking about the present. For modern
science arises within this shift in consciousness and by its
pervasive presence forces, so to speak, recognition of and clarity
about the shift. Said again: while the actual spread of scientific
technology has "physically" disrupted traditional moorings, the
reality of modern science as compelling, generally valid, and
methodologically self-conscious knowledge - - what Jaspers refers
to not as some hypostatized "Science" nor simply as so many
definite sciences, but as the "universal scientific approach"
(Wissenschaftlichkeit)[62] - - has effected a critique of the
possibilities of reason. It "transforms all traditional thinking"
and "has changed the state of all truth ever handed down to us."[63]
It results in a "universal methodological consciousness " - -
an awakening from naive or dogmatic slumber, a deep sense of the

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[61]Of course all of the exposition of Jaspers' thought
in succeeding chapters, and especially in the next chapter, is
"further elucidation" of this shift in consciousness.

[62]PFR, p. 50. Cf. pp. 50-60.

[63]PFR, p. 51.

limits of all knowledge, and thus a rejection of traditional
metaphysical and religious claims to the status of knowledge and
universal truth.[64]

Yet the rise of science and the critique of reason in
themselves are neither the whole nor the heart of that anthropo-
centric turn constitutive of the present crisis. They are,
rather, inseparable from the long and complex development of the
modern sense of freedom as individual autonomy. In Kantian
terms, the first Critique leads necessarily to the second;
knowledge is denied to make room for freedom. Not, of course,
the empty freedom of mere arbitrariness, but that deeper freedom
constitutive of the human self. For it is above all this sense of
the self which epitomizes the shift in consciousness.[65] It is,
initially at least, a freedom from - from natural necessity,
natural law, and the constraining dogmatisms, authorities, and
forms of traditional thought and life. Yet it is also, or
potentially, a freedom for for the possibility of historic
self realization and the endless quest for truth in those spaces

[64]PPR, pp. 288-292.

[65]Jaspers' discussion of the present, interestingly enough,
does not so much stress as presuppose the absolute centrality of
the idea of freedom at the core of the contemporary crisis. This
is perhaps because freedom is so fundamental to all of his thinking.
On freedom and the crisis cf. OGH, pp. 152 ss. and PPR, pp. 292-
297. On the centrality of the idea of the autonomous self in
Jaspers' thought and its roots in German Idealism cf. the very
important article by Heinrich Barth, "Karl Jaspers über Glaube
und Geschichte," in Karl Jaspers in der Diskussion, pp. 275-277.

or horizons opened by critical detachment and methodological clarity.[66]

It is, finally, the modern sense of history which recapitulates and concretizes the critically changed consciousness of reason and freedom. It is this sense, in part a result of the immense activity of the historical sciences and in part a consequence of the new global horizon established by modern technology, which relativizes and situates traditional beliefs and teachings in a manner well exemplified by Jaspers' own schema of world history and his writings on the present age.[67] Lessing's infamous "ditch" (Graben) runs down the center of that chasm separating us from the past. What were once objective realities and eternal verities have become relative and ever-changing creations of the human spirit. History, not nature, is the mobile home of humanity — the record of human striving and the field of human freedom.[68]

[66]This sense of freedom is well expressed in Lessing's famous aphorism that man's worth is found not "in the truth he possesses" but "in everlasting striving after truth."

[67]Here again Jaspers does not so much stress as presuppose the centrality of the modern idea of history in the crisis of contemporary consciousness. And again this is probably because his own thinking is so deliberately conditioned by that change. Jaspers' understanding of the historicity of thought has already been touched on at the beginning of this chapter and will be taken up in detail in Chapter IV.

[68]The "inner" shift in consciousness could also be characterized, in terms of man's relation to nature, as a separation or even alienation from nature given with the modern understanding of reason, freedom, and history. It is illustrative of the shift and of Jaspers' thinking within it that a discussion of nature is not fundamental to his thought in the way the anthropocentric themes of reason, freedom, and history are.

Thus the present crisis when seen within Jaspers' schema of world history is an almost total remaking of the external and internal conditions of human existence. Past unities have been destroyed; world unity of some kind is inevitable; and a new awareness of limits, a pervasive sense of relativity, and a fundamental conviction of autonomy govern life and thought. In itself this establishment of new conditions is not progress; neither is it decline. It is, rather, deeply ambiguous, the basis of that ambiguity which, as noted above, characterizes the entire present turning point in human history and leaves us at a momentous cross-roads. Initially and tragically destructive, this turning has nonetheless clarified new possibilities. Criticism denies the possibility of metaphysics, reducing knowledge to the limited accuracy of objective and technical rationality (Verstand). But it also clarifies the possibility of a larger, transcending sense of reason (Vernunft). Freedom leads to isolation, alienation, the narrow confines of privacy and the emptiness of merely arbitrary commitments. But it also opens the possibility of that existential radicalization of freedom which (for Jaspers) is the sole road to transcendent truth. History severs the roots of tradition and casts one adrift in endless possibility. But it also makes possible the free reappropriation of those roots in the living struggle of communication with other traditions and truths. The present crisis opens a way through the terrible fires of nihilism to a purified

possibility of transformed and renewed faith.[69] The "new age"
may well be the graveyard of freedom and faith, an iron cage of
total control and universal levelling - - from the twilight of
the West to a global night. Or the present darkness may presage
a new, world-wide dawn.[70]

Jaspers devoted his life's work to the struggle for that
dawn.[71] And there was for him (as already noted at the end of the
first section of this chapter) only one general path in that struggle,
a path leading to the future via the past. Pure rebellion against
the darkness, however tempting and understandable, is no more
adequate than paralyzed resignation.[72] Nor can the struggle be
escaped by either a mechanical repetition of the past or a total
rejection of the past in the name of progress or of some supposedly
new departure.[73] "We must," rather, "try to cling to memories
across a chasm."[74] We must rekindle the flame of the Axial Period
"amid the utterly new conditions of (human) existence."[75] The task

[69]OCH, pp. 214-219, 266; PSP, pp. 172-176.

[70]PA, pp. 83-84. Cf. Saner, Karl Jaspers, pp. 104-105.

[71]In the obituary which he composed for himself he speaks
of this work as a causeless effort to find a way "from the end of
European philosophy into an approaching world-philosophy."
"Nekrolog von Karl Jaspers selbst verfasst," Gedankenfeier für
Karl Jaspers am 4 März 1969 in der Martinskirche, Basler Universitätsreden
60 Heft (Basel: Verlag Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1969), p. 4.

[72]PPR, pp. 294-295.

[73]PSP, p. 174-176.

[74]EH, p. 61.

[75]PSP, p. 159.

is extremely difficult because the break is real, the new conditions really new. Yet there is, for Jaspers, no other way in the present. It could even be said that the most general or fundamental of the new conditions determined by the crisis is precisely the necessity of this struggle to recover the past. This dialectical holding together of a real, definitive break and a necessary continuity is, for Jaspers, the cross of the present, the challenge of our fate.[76]

3.

Jaspers, as already noted, devoted considerable attention to religion in his later years as a direct result of his understanding of this challenge of the present age. His analysis of religious pluralism is part, a very important part, of that struggle to recover the past, and his understanding of religious truth is worked out within those new conditions which constitute our present. In a very real sense, then, all of the essential aspects of Jaspers' understanding of the problem of religious pluralism and truth have already been discussed. They need only

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[76]The assertion that "there is no other way" must be clarified. The future may well see an absolute break where only a new Axial Period, a new "revelation" of some sort would rekindle the light of faith. The future is open and it will not be determined by human action alone. It is finally a matter of grace and destiny. Still "it is probable that the faith of the future will continue to move within the fundamental positions and categories of the Axial Period." OGH, p. 225. In any event, our attitude cannot be one of fatal passivity. It must (paradoxically) be a response to the challenge of our fate. And for Jaspers this means that the responsible path in the struggle for humanity (for faith) is that dialectic of recourse to the past within the present. Cf. OGH, pp. 226-228.

be recapitulated briefly and made more explicit at several points.

The present crisis is quite evidently a crisis of concrete faiths and especially of those religious faiths which have illuminated humanity's three great spiritual spheres since the Axial Period. These great traditions have shattered under the impact of modernization.[77] It is a story often told: loss of religion among the masses, the secularization of daily life, the retreat of faith to the sphere of privacy as the window dressing of bourgeois culture. Yet, since "man is incapable of living without faith" of some sort,[78] the crisis is manifest not only in a decline of the traditional faiths, but also in their ossification and, more generally, in the decay of authentic faith into pseudo-faiths. Narrowly dogmatic and fundamentalist religion, the fanaticism of rigid political ideology, the distracting triviality of magic and superstition, or the desperation of chemical ecstasies and instant saviors -- these are some of the forms of pseudo-faith (or unfaith) to which man retreat in a blind, almost reflex groping for fixed stability amidst the vertigo of loss and change.[79]

Such fixation has, of course, always been a danger, for religion is nothing if it is not positive and institutional, letter as well as spirit. Yet particularly with the advent of the

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[77]OGH, p. 131.

[78]MMA, p. 152.   Cf. OGH, p. 132.

[79]Cf. OGH, pp. 132-134, 216-219; PSP, pp. 118-146, 159-164.

modern era the great religions have undergone a sclerotic

rigidification induced by defensive posturing and internal

fragmentation.[80] Organic wholeness or "catholicity" has been

reduced to the narrow confines of "catholicism" (Katholizität)

or "orthodoxy" - - spiritless formalism which binds and blinds,

and betrays that soaring of faith once realized in the positive

confines of rite and creed.[81] Tragically, and ironically, this

defensive fixation has transformed authentic religious faith into

something typically modern - - the rationalized, objectifying

ethos which thrusts toward total order, total planning, and the

total levelling of the local, particular, and personal.[82] Thus

rigid orthodoxy in whatever form - - whether in the remnants

of the traditional faiths or in the new religions which have

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[80]While most of Jaspers' concrete examples of such
fixation are taken from Western Christianity, it is clear from
what he says generally about the present age that he sees this
process as a world-wide possibility. There are, moreover,
scattered references to the process of fixation in the other
religions, particularly in Confucian China: cf. VdW, p. 811;
GPsP, pp. 71-72. Still, both because his own situation and
immediate concern is Western Christianity, and because the
claim to exclusive possession of the truth attained a unique
form in the Christian doctrine of revelation, Jaspers focuses
his discussion primarily on the crisis of Western religion.

[81]Such "catholicism" is found not only in the Catholic
Church, but "everywhere in the world." VdW, p. 833 n. 1. Cf.
Jaspers' entire discussion of the decay of true authority into
fixed untruth: VdW, pp. 789, 819-830, and 832-868 (esp. 833,
835, 841-2, 847-50).

[82]Cf. PFR, pp. 44-48. Yet the basic content of
traditional faith "will always offset the totalitarian trend"
so that such "catholicism" remains worlds apart from the
horrors of modern (secular) totalitarian rule. PFR, p. 47.

sprung up in the vacuum created by their decline - - has become one among many pseudo-faiths, ideological curtains veiling the actual loss of real faith. Where it is not already evident in the direct loss of faith, the crisis of the religions is clearly manifest in the chaotic plethora of old and new dogmatisms, and in the widespread loss of ability to distinguish the once great faiths from their degenerate forms and trivial or terrible surrogates.

Yet this crisis, as noted above, involves not only destruction, but the possibility of renewal, the possibility that the great religious faiths might be transformed and thus reappropriated within those conditions constitutive of the present. "What the millenniums have disclosed to man of transcendence could once again become articulate after it had been assimilated in changed form."[83] In fact, as Jaspers notes, the very "brittleness" of the religions might facilitate the emergence of new forms from "the shells of their dogmas and institutions."[84] Such renewal is, moreover, not simply desirable as one aspect of the general struggle for faith in this time of darkness; it is crucial for that struggle. The religions have been the bearers of the axial heritage. They have shaped the continuity and handed on the substance of faith. Even where (in the West) faith has sprung up independently from religion, as philosophical faith, it has been made possible

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[83]MMA, p. 178.

[84]PFR, p. 322.

only by the institutional and cultural continuity of religion.[85]
Philosophical faith depends upon religion for the "sociologically
effective transmission of the contents indispensible to man which
occurs solely through religious tradition," solely because these
contents "live in the people through religious faith."[86] Thus
today "what will become of the churches may decide the Western
fate" and will certainly be crucial in the East where the
distinction of philosophy and religion has not (yet) been
realized.[87] "Hence the great concern about the vigor and
veracity of ecclesiastic faith."[88] And it is this concern which
makes the fact and problem of religious pluralism a matter of
central importance for Jaspers.

Religion must be renewed today, within the conditions
constitutive of the present. Yet those very conditions make a
heightened and problematic awareness of religious pluralism
inescapable. The new, global horizon has forced the great
religions from their splendid isolation (and exclusivity), and
the development of critical consciousness has forced a recognition

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[85]Of course the distinction between philosophy and
religion has a complex history, but the possibility of their
separation, as two independent realms of faith, is distinctively
modern. Cf. PFR, pp. 52-55. Such philosophical faith, however,
is no rarefied phenomenon restricted to an academically trained
elite. It is independent faith found wherever free and thoughtful
self-realization characterizes individual existence.

[86]PGP, p. 112.

[87]PFR, p. 320.

[88]PFR p. 320.

of the rational and historical limits of all truth claims (and
thus rendered universal and exclusive claims suspect). In a
sense, the new situation created by the present crisis makes a
realistic appraisal of pluralism not only necessary, but also
for the first time, a serious possibility. Said again, a real
religious pluralism is a serious possibility for the first time
in human history because of those conditions which have destroyed
the relative and partial universality of the different tradi-
tions.[89] Such pluralism in the renewal and mutual communication
of the great faiths is the goal, or one crucial goal of the
struggle for faith in the present crisis. But this renewal can
be achieved and this real pluralism attained only via the
transformation of the great religious faiths, by the re-formation
of their self-understanding in terms of those conditions governing
contemporary life and thought.

> Since the transformation in our objective
> living conditions goes so deep, the trans-
> formation in our forms of religious belief
> must go correspondingly deeper in order to
> mold the new, to fructify and spiritualize
> it. A change is to be expected in what we
> have called the matter, the dress, the mani-
> festation, the language of faith, a change
> as far reaching as all the other changes
> that have taken place in our era.[90]

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[89] Of course the new situation could also give rise to a
universal faith. Not, of course, the empty abstractions of some
syncretist or universal religion. We have already seen that Jaspers
dismisses such "cosmopolitanism." The only world faith which is
actually possible is that ideological pseudo-faith which would
accompany the rise of a totalitarian world-state - - a possibility
to be dreaded, not desired.

[90] PSF, p. 100.

> In the age of science and technology
> /the great religions/ cannot stay as
> they are. Their coming change will
> be more profound than any past one,
> or else they will perish.[91]

The character of this transformation cannot be foreseen in all of its dimensions. It will occur, if at all, within the ongoing life of the religions, in the struggle of religious persons for the truth of their faith. Thus it is a matter about which the philosopher, as an outsider, can only speak hesitantly, aware of the inadequacy of what he says.[92] Yet one aspect of the required transformation is, for Jaspers, very clear (and he is not hesitant in asserting its necessity). It is given with those very critical developments which inescapably condition life and thought - - given with the distinction between (universally valid) science and (absolutely, existentially valid) faith and with consciousness of historicity. It is the necessity that the claim to exclusive and universal validity be renounced. Not until "the poison of exclusive claims" is removed will the

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[91] PFR, p. 41. Cf. pp. 129-136.

[92] PSP, pp. 108-109; PFR, pp. 322 ss. Jaspers, as already noted, claims that philosophy and religion have separated in the modern West so that one in fact walks the path of either religious or philosophical faith. The accuracy of this claim can be questioned and, more significantly, the extent to which Jaspers himself respects this separation can be questioned. As will be seen, one of the fundamental criticisms of his understanding of religion concerns whether the transformation of religion he calls for is not, in fact, a transformation of (a plurality of) concrete religious faiths into (a single) philosophical faith.

truth of religious faith be preserved and renewed for the present
and future of humanity.[93] Yet with this renunciation and the
transformation/renewal it makes possible, there arises, as noted,
the possibility of real religious pluralism - - the affirmation
that more than one religion can be true.

Jaspers, of course, does not claim that this transformation
will be easy. Not only has the present crisis caused the traditional
faiths to become even more rigid and exclusive, but "the claim to
exclusivity belongs in fact to the nature of authority" and to the
relationship to transcendence by which authority justifies itself - -
and this is a fortiori true for religious authority.[94] Nor does
his assertion of this necessary transformation demonstrate or at
least clarify its possibility. On the contrary, it raises again
the question about the meaning (logic) of the word "truth" when
used with regard to such transformed religious faith. That
question is taken up by Jaspers in his more systematic discussion
of faith and truth, and particularly in his struggle against the
(prevailing) Christian understanding of revelation.[95] (It is

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[93]PPR, p. 342. Cf. PGP, pp. 88-97; VdW, pp. 816 ss.,
833 ss; OGH, pp. 226-227. This is a call not for the renunciation
of particular traditions and their claims, but of the universal
validity which those claims have always entailed. Arendt, p. 541.

[94]VdW, p. 817. Of course for Jaspers it is this very
reference to transcendence which necessitates the renunciation of
exclusivity for all immanent forms.

[95]As noted, Jaspers focuses primarily on "biblical religion"
both because it is the religion with which the West must be concerned
and because only in the sphere of "biblical religion" with its

that systematic thinking-through of what has been referred to
here as "the conditions constitutive of our age" which is taken
up in the next chapter.) It is clear, however, that for Jaspers
the politically and historically crucial goal of such thinking
within the present crisis is to "seek the ground on which men
of every religious persuasion might meaningfully meet around
the world, ready to recommit themselves to their own historic
traditions, to purify them, to transform them, but not to
abandon them."[96] "The situation of our times makes such a
transformation - - of biblical religion for us Westerners, of
other religions for their believers, of philosophy for all - -
almost palpably evident."[97]

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There are various critical questions which might be
raised regarding particular aspects of Jaspers' understanding
of the problem of religious pluralism and truth, regarding the
very idea of a crisis and the schematic conception of history.[98]
At this point, however, it must suffice to raise in a preliminary way

particular understanding of revelation has the claim to
exclusivity become a central and explicit doctrine of immense
consequence. PSP, p. 92. Cf. PSP, pp. 88-97 and PFR, passim.

[96] PFR, p. vii.

[97] PFR, p. viii.

[98] Cf., for example, the various criticisms summarized
in Werner Schneiders, Karl Jaspers in der Kritik (Bonn: H. Bouvier
and Co. Verlag, 1965), pp. 116-171, 226-228.

one question (or a series of related questions) which bears
directly on Jaspers' approach to the question of religious
pluralism. It should be clear, from remarks made above and
in the preceding chapter, that Jaspers' understanding of the
problem of religious pluralism within the broader horizon of
the crisis of our age, his refusal to treat it as an academic
or a narrowly religious question, is here taken as a signifi-
cant contribution to thinking about religious pluralism. What
must be questioned is neither the fact of the crisis nor its
significance for thinking about religious pluralism, but the
adequacy of Jaspers' interpretation of that significance.

The crux of Jaspers' interpretation of the present
age is his joint affirmation of both a radical break and a
necessary continuity with the past, of both fundamentally new
conditions and the possibility of transforming and reappro-
priating past traditions within the new conditions. It is this
dialectical holding together of new and old which, for Jaspers,
makes possible an affirmation of both religious truth and
religious pluralism. Yet it is precisely this holding together,
this particular dialectical conjunction of old faiths and new
conditions which must be questioned. Jaspers' intention, of
course, is not the emergence of some synthesis in the form
of a new, universal faith, but the possibility of particular
(and plural) existential realizations of faith emerging in the

conflict of traditional forms and new conditions. But the extent
to which this intention can be realized within the framework of
his thinking is open to question. Perhaps the old and the new are
finally and fundamentally irreconcilable. Perhaps such dialectical
thinking veils this irreconcilability and constitutes an evasion
of the hard choices and real alternatives confronting us in the
present crisis. Perhaps, while the strength and attractiveness
of Jaspers' thinking derives, as he himself stresses, from the
axial past, his effort to retain that past within the new
conditions of the present may well blur the "decisive difference"
between them.[99] Perhaps, finally, such "reappropriation" of the
past would not be simply a dialectical negation of its form and
transformation of its substance, but a negation of both form and
substance, a loss of the truth and the plurality of the old
faiths within the (normative and universal and exclusive) truth
determined by the new conditions.[100]

This line of questioning can be pursued somewhat
differently by asking whether, in fact, Jaspers' understanding
of the present crisis is sufficiently deep or radical. On the
one hand, then, it might be argued (as above) that his grasp of
the crisis is not radical enough since he does not admit the
fundamental irreconcilability between the new conditions and

[99] H. Barth, p. 279.

[100] Thus Jaspers' thought would indeed "stand unmistakably
under the angle of Hegel." Ibid, p. 281. Cf. pp. 276-279. A
concrete plurality of religions would be aufgehoben (aufgehoben)
into the unity of philosophical faith.

the traditional faiths. Thus, while he proclaims the significance of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, he does not accept their assessment of such fundamental irreconcilability. Rather he neutralizes their real significance by categorizing them as "exceptions" and thus effectively dismissing them with lavish praise.[101] On the other hand, however, it might be argued that Jaspers' view of the present crisis is too deep, and this for two related reasons. In the first place, and despite his own repeated warnings against any total knowledge of the present, his understanding of the crisis absolutizes those "necessary and inescapable conditions constitutive of the present" in an almost monolithic historicist fashion. Thus, as suggested above, the very universality and necessity of these conditions would seem to negate any real plurality. The transformation required of all (particular and different) traditional faiths would effectively render them just so many forms of a general, existential faith.[102] Secondly, however, while Jaspers may indeed have understood the deepest and most pervasive currents constitutive of our present situation, they may not constitute a monolithic necessity for thought. It may well be not only possible, even if extremely difficult, but necessary

[101]Cf. PF, pp. 3/ 39 on Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as "exceptions" and Walter Kaufmann's "Jaspers' Relation to Nietzsche" in Schilpp, pp. 407/436, for an extreme example of such a critique of this use of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

[102]Thus the distinction made in the previous chapter between Jaspers' own faith and his analysis of the logic of faith would disappear;

to think outside of and in resistance to those currents (or
conditions) if one is to adequately understand the logic of
religious truth and the plurality of religious traditions.

At this point, however, these questions about Jaspers'
framework for understanding the problem of religious pluralism
and truth remain tentative and hypothetical. We do most
evidently live in an age of crisis which has revolutionized
the conditions of existence, shaken the great religious
traditions, heightened awareness of religious pluralism, and
cast doubt upon the very idea of religious truth. In this age,
as Jaspers observes, a necessary transformation of the religions
is "almost palpably evident." Yet the character of that trans-
formation, the way in which truth and pluralism are best
understood, is not "palpably evident." Jaspers' position on
that transformation is clear enough. Yet the point of these
questions is that his position is not without serious difficulties.
The conditions of the modern consciousness within which he
is to interpret religious truth may in fact be more part of the
problem than part of the solution. Thus the way in which he
understands the problem of pluralism and truth may exemplify
that critical ambiguity in Jaspers[105] whereby one part of his
thinking (his affirmation of "present conditions" and "modern
consciousness") betrays the general intention of that thinking

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[105]Cf. Chapter I, p. 33 (above).

(to affirm religious truth and pluralism). What he wrote of Nicholas of Cusa may prove to be true of himself: "His insights lacked the power to penetrate the deceptions of his time."[104]

Jaspers, of course, recognizes the difficulties involved in these questions. The very real tension (and the irreconcilabilities which are real or final) between past and present indicate, he would say, the depth of the chasm separating us from the past and the very real dangers involved in the present. Yet there is, he would still argue, no other way to the recovery of faith than through the realities of the present. His life's work, as already noted, can be seen as an effort to understand and articulate those realities as a "common ground" or a "common framework so broadly based that historically heterogeneous faiths could communicate in it without abandoning themselves."[105] It would, in other words, provide a logic which reconciles plurality and truth. The Grundgedanke to which we now turn is one articulation of that framework.

[104]GPT, p. 250. Cf. p. 116: "The realities confronting him were not what he believed them to be, and he was essentially unaware of this fact and its consequences."

[105]PFR, p. 88.

III

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF FAITH AND TRUTH

While Jaspers' understanding of religious truth is
naturally exemplified and clarified in his explicit discussions
of religion, it is above all in certain recurring foundational
ideas that the basis for that understanding is established. It
is to those foundational ideas or, better said, that foundational
thinking,[1] that attention must now be turned in an effort to map
out the contours of the logic of religious truth.

The crisis of the present, as noted above, consists in
the radical shaking of all previous foundations and the emergence
of new conditions governing life and thought. It is that crisis,
with its urgent struggle for the recovery of faith and the
unprecedented possibility of a "common framework" for the communica-
tion of historically heterogeneous faiths, which has determined for
Jaspers the present task of philosophical logic -- "the discovery
of a simple, essential, and comprehensive foundational thinking."[2]
Said another way, while Jaspers' philosophy proposes no one system
or set of doctrines, there is still a continually recurrent pattern

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[1] Jaspers' term, "ein Grundgedanke," admits of both
translations: a thought, as in a set of ideas, or a process
of thinking. It will be clear to anyone familiar with Jaspers'
writings that the idea of "foundational thinking" discussed in
this chapter is broader in scope than Jaspers' literal use of
the term "Grundgedanke." The reason for this is discussed below.

[2] VdW, p. 24.

of systematically thought and controlling ideas which are its
determinative basis, "the ideas which govern its development."[3]
It is, then, these ideas or patterns of thinking which establish
the possibility of a plurality of true religions by distinguishing
between the universality of truth in science and matters of fact
and the absolute, yet never universalizable, character of truth in
matters of faith.

The purpose of the present chapter, then, is to present
those central ideas of Jasper's foundational thinking which at
once open the way to a possible affirmation of transcendent (and
thus religious) truth and exemplify the logic of Jaspers' approach
to that affirmation. Yet the methodological remark made in
both preceding chapters bears special reiteration here. No attempt
is made at a complete discussion of Jaspers' foundational ideas.
What follows is not a review of the various paths of foundational
thinking traced by Jaspers, nor is it simply a repetition of one
of those. It is, rather, the effort to trace a path of foundational
thinking, what Jaspers himself at one point calls "a typical
sequence of fundamental philosophical questions,"[4] and thereby to
recapitulate, in an exercise of systematic thinking drawn from
various parts of Jaspers' work, the basic content, structure, and
direction of that thinking. Thus the bulk of this chapter is devoted

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[3]Gabriel Marcel, Creative Fidelity, trans. Robert
Rosthal (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Co., 1964), p. 222.

[4]VdW, p. 671.

to (1) a presentation of a sketch of Jaspers' foundational thinking. This presentation is followed by (2) a brief discussion of the notion of existential truth which flows from such foundations and (3) a review of some critical questions which must be raised about them.

1.

Because the character of Jaspers' foundational thinking is not so straightforward or uncomplicated as the image of "foundations" might suggest, some preliminary remarks are appropriate by way of introduction. The term "Grundgedanke" comes to the fore in Jaspers' later writings -- in the effort of Von der Wahrheit to articulate the foundations for a comprehensive philosophical logic and in subsequent works (including Philosophical Faith and Revelation) where he employs the categories first fully developed in Von der Wahrheit.[5] It refers specifically to that "basic philosophical knowledge" which is an "elucidation of the encompassing" in its various modes.[6] Yet Jaspers' foundational thinking can in no way

[5] Consistent with his "great care to avoid too much terminological precision," Jaspers speaks equally of a Grundgedanke (singular: foundational thought or thinking), of Grundgedanken (plural: foundational ideas), of a philosophische Grundwissen (a "basic philosophical knowledge" which, however, he explicitly contrasts with knowledge in the ordinary sense of "cogent, generally valid cognition," cf. PFR, p. 183) or more generally of a Denken der Ursprünge (thinking of or to origins) and a Philosophie des Umgreifenden (philosophy of the encompassing). Cf. VdW, pp. 24, 28, 29, 42, 44, 190.

[6] Das Umgreifende, the "encompassing" (or the "comprehensive" as it is sometimes translated) is the term developed by Jaspers to designate the never graspable presence of being as the source or origin of that which appears according to various irreducible modes within the subject-object dichotomy of experience. Cf. below pp. 121-126.

be construed as something limited to or newly developed in that
later work. All of his philosophical work is, as already noted,
an attempt to think systematically to and from the most basic
foundations of the human situation.[7] This, of course, is especially
true of his two masterworks, Philosophie and Von der Wahrheit. And
while the question of the relationship of these two works is a
fascinating and important question for scholarship devoted to
Jaspers' life and the development of his philosophy, what is signi-
ficant for present purposes is their essential unity as expressions
of that single movement of foundational thinking which achieved
various forms for various purposes throughout his work.[8] Thus the
idea of foundational thinking under consideration here is not
limited to one work or one period of Jaspers' work. It is the
controlling set of ideas which pervade all of that work.

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[7]At one point Jaspers notes that he had at various
times made four different attempts at a "systematic outline"
of his thought. Cf. OMP, p. 158. Even more significant are
the numerous instance of "typical sequences of foundational
thinking" from various angles or points of departure both
within each of the major works and throughout the shorter
writings. Cf., for example, VdW, pp. 29-46, 871-902; Ph I,
pp. 45-90; Ph II, pp. 3-12; OMP, pp. 138-55; PSP, pp. 1-23;
PE, pp. 3-29.

[8]Saner, Karl Jaspers, p. 111. Much, of course, needs
to be said about the complex of various internal interrelations
between these two massive works. Cf., for instance, the impor-
tant article by Ernst Mayer, "Philosophie und philosophische
Logik bei Jaspers," in Saner, ed., Karl Jaspers in der Diskussion,
pp. 224-232. It must suffice here to compare their remarkable
unity, yet irreducible difference, to two musical compositions by
the same master - - written years apart, with different frameworks,
yet employing most of the same themes and somehow achieving the
same effect. As Tilliette says (pp. 21-22), "they interpenetrate
without repeating each other, and mutually presuppose each other,....
there is perhaps a difference of inflection, a displacement of
accent, but certainly no rupture, nor even properly speaking, an
evolution."

This point about the fundamental unity of Jaspers'
various works can be made in another way which will further
characterize the notion of foundational thinking. Although
mention of "controlling, foundational ideas" might easily
be taken to suggest some basic set of doctrines, Jaspers
clearly does not intend that his Grundgedanke be understood
in that way.

> All past ways of the basic knowledge were
> linked with a knowledge of Being. They
> were ontologies. Our modern basic knowledge
> can make no such claim; its character is
> different.[9]

As a movement of thought, foundational thinking clearly and
necessarily involves contents or centrally recurring ideas and
themes, and such ideas, thought systematically, are easily
schematized after the manner of a basic set of doctrines. Yet
for Jaspers, as already noted, although ideas, thought structures,
and teachings are necessary, "the point of reference lies not
in the doctrine itself, but in the possible goal of the motion."[10]
The ideas or contents of thought are instruments for the accomplish-
ment of that movement, like "a ladder which is to be given up after
it is used."[11] The result is "not an expoundable doctrine but a
movement of thought, a movement to be entered into . . . if one is
to understand its meaning."[12] Such a movement of thought cannot

[9]PPR, p. 87.

[10]Ph I, p. 18.

[11]VdW, p. 28.

[12]Ph I, p. 34.

be captured in any final set of doctrines, as something won and possessed. It can only be communicated indirectly, through various and differing systematizations of foundational thinking. Thus Jaspers' foundational ideas are conceived and employed in a manner which seems deliberately designed to frustrate the hunger for doctrine and to necessitate their being thought (in the active and suggestive sense of "thought through").[13]

In one sense, then, there is and can be no one Grundgedanke because that which such thinking intends -- the basic, the ground, being -- cannot be known. Even Jaspers' foundational thinking taken (as here) as a loosely unified whole must finally, he insists, be seen not as the sole foundation, but only as a foundational thinking. It remains in principle incomplete, in suspension (Schwebend).[14] Yet for Jaspers the essential unity of this thinking is found in its dialectical character as "intellectual operations which transcend the limits of the knowable . . . so that through these limits we become aware of the phenomenality of empirical existence and hence of the encompassing nature of being, thus entering into the area of faith."[15] This dialectical movement

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[13]The absolutely central concepts of "transcendence" and "encompassing," for example, designate not objects, but directions of thinking.

[14]R, p. 802; PFR, pp. 82-83, 88-89.

[15]PSP, pp. 29-30. For consistency of usage throughout the present work, the translation of Umgreifende here (and elsewhere) has been changed from "comprehensive" to "encompassing."

of transcending in thought beyond thought is, as Dufrenne and Ricoeur note, "the fundamental operation" of Jaspers' philosophy.[16] It is the central, unifying movement in that recurring pattern of ideas which constitutes a foundational thinking or a "basic philosophical knowledge."[17] Its goal is "not the cognition of an object, but rather an alteration of our consciousness of Being and of our inner attitude toward things."[18] It is a transformation of consciousness, a (self-) critical turnabout (Umwendung) which clarifies our basic human situation, the limits of knowledge, the possibility and nature of faith, and thus the possibility and nature of religious truth.[19]

A. Fundamental Situation, Basic Questions

Lest, however, such preliminary characterization of Jaspers' foundational thinking remain too abstract, it becomes necessary to turn to the actual contents of a typical pattern of such thinking which begins with a description of the basic situation of human existence. Jaspers is fond of quoting a story told in Bede's history which compares "men's present life

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[16] Op. cit., p. 33.

[17] As will be seen below, the idea of transcending is at once, inseparably, "transcendental" (or critically self-conscious of the conditions of thought) and "transcendent" (in moving beyond the limits of knowledge). Key texts descriptive of this transcending are to be found in Ph I, pp. 76-89; Ph III, pp. 30-39; VdW, pp. 35-42; PFR, pp. 74-82.

[18] RE, p. 75. Cf. Ph I, pp. 1, 34.

[19] PFR, pp. 76-78.

on earth" with the picture of a medieval hall, a blazing fire

warming within but dark night and a raging storm outside.

> Then a sparrow flies in and swiftly flits
> through the hall, in one door and out the
> other. For the moment of being indoors it
> is safe from the wintry blasts; but after
> the quick passage through the short, pleasant
> span it disappears from sight and returns
> from winter to winter. So too this human
> life is but like one single instant. We do
> not know what has gone before nor what will
> follow.[20]

Foundational thinking begins with this basic situation of the

momentary, ever changing, fundamentally dark or problematic

character of human existence. Or, perhaps better said, it

begins with the fundamental experience of the inescapable

situatedness of human existence.

> When I become aware of myself I see that
> I am in a world in which I take my bearings . . .
> I wonder and ask myself what really is. For
> all things pass away, and I was not at the
> beginning, nor am I at the end . . . though
> I can neither fully grasp my situation nor
> see through its origin; the sense of it
> oppresses me with a vague fear. I can see
> the situation only as a motion that keeps
> transforming me along with itself, a motion
> that carries me from a darkness in which I
> did not exist to a darkness in which I
> shall not exist.[21]

Jaspers' starting point clearly reflects the insecurity and

anxiety of the present age, yet it is not inte   simply as a

reflection of contemporary experience. That experience, rather,

is itself a reflection of the truly fundamental and thus perennial

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[20]PFR, p. 4; cf. CT, pp. 12-13.

[21]Ph I, p. 44 (from the opening lines of Jaspers'
Philosophy).

human situation - - a situation too easily forgotten in the self-deceiving securities of less troubled ages.[22] Jaspers both echoes and calls upon the great traditions of religion and thought in describing this basic, as yet not analyzed, experience of the fragmentary, incomplete, "irresistably fluid" and thus threatening character of the human situation.[23] It is not an experience of unity, wholeness, or being, but of the "tornness of being" (Zerissenheit des Seins) in endlessly changing appearance.[24] "The fact is that we are everywhere confronted with fissures, cracks, which somehow penetrate the presumed integrity of being."[25]

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[22]Thus Jaspers' preference in his writings on history for those periods and persons caught in critical change since they are moments of disillusioned clarity about the fundamental human situation. The paradigm for all such moments is, of course, the Axial Period.

[23]PFR, pp. 4-5; CT, pp. 12 ss.

[24]VdW, pp. 703, 871-874; Ph I, pp. 47-48.

[25]Marcel, p. 250. It is worth noting that while Jaspers' further analysis of this basic situation is presented in less dark, more abstract terms such as "fundamental limitations," "basic antimonies," and "the subject-object dichotomy," the basic experience seems one of almost unrelieved alienation. Thus the world is in constant and "irresistable" flux (Ph I, p. 43-4); it is "dark," "disjointed," "depleted and entangled" (Ph I, p. 59); ever phenomenal or objective, it seems a "prison" which shackles freedom (PFR, pp. 77, 79). This darkness is seen again, later, in the centrality to Jaspers' thinking of the boundary situations of death, suffering, struggle, guilt, and more generally of "the dubiousness and historicity of all existence" (Ph II, pp. 193-222). Thus while there are clear parallels between this evocation of the human situation and "the great traditions of religion and thought," there may well be other significant parallels with the heretical traditions of gnostic thought. Cf., for instance, Hans Jonas' essay "Gnosticism, Existentialism and Nihilism," in The Gnostic Religion (2nd ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 320-340, which does not refer directly to Jaspers, but contains suggestions not irrelevant for understanding Jaspers.

Yet there is, so to speak, another, equally fundamental component in this basic situation described by Jaspers. Existence is problematic or questionable to human experience because that experience is always already founded in a question or a quest for that unity which overcomes fragmentation or that whole which grounds constant flux. The experience of existence as fundamentally problematic presupposes even as it awakens the possibility of such basic questioning. The experience and the questioning are the two inseparable and interdependent components of the basic situation: Neither is given automatically or necessarily. They do not arise as such in the daily "getting and spending" of empirical existence (Dasein), nor is their significance demonstrable to the "clear and distinct" calculations of consciousness-in-general (Bewusstsein überhaupt). Yet the shock of events may plunge awareness to a deeper level, awakening that questioning which "changes man's inner condition."[26]

Such questioning can, of course, take many forms. Jaspers typically structures his writings at different times around different sets of basic questions. There are those "formulated by Kant with, I felt, moving simplicity: 1. What can I know? 2. What shall I do? 3. What may I hope? 4. What is man?"[27] Again there is the threefold exploration of the

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[26]PFR, p. 4. Jaspers cites Augustine's testimony to the depth of such questioning: "I am cast into the world . . . I have become a question unto myself. . . ." PFR, p. 5.

[27]OMP, pp. 139, 142-152. Jean Wahl notes how the three volume structure of Philosophy corresponds to Kant's basic questioning about world, soul, and God. La Pensée de l'Existence, p. 78.

question of <u>being</u>, the question of <u>truth</u>, and the question of reality.[28] Or in most abbreviated form there is the single Grundfrage,"What is Being?"[29] In whatever form, however, such basic questioning is not concerned with matters of fact, questioning about this or that. It arises, rather, at the limit of factual knowledge or worldly activity and is a limit or boundary questioning (<u>Grenzfrage</u>) about the whole or origin or ground of the realm of facts and activity. In the flux of time it is a question about that which transcends time. Within the multiplicity of truths (<u>Richtigkeit</u>) it seeks truth (<u>Wahrheit</u>); in the diversity of realities (<u>Realität</u>) it seeks reality (<u>Wirklichkeit</u>); amidst beings (<u>Seienden</u>) it seeks being (<u>Sein</u>).

Even more noteworthy, perhaps, is the fact that such basic questioning is not disinterested metaphysical speculation. "If it is true that the problem of the human situation is always a metaphysical question, it is equally true in reverse . . . that <u>the metaphysical problem of Being is an existential question</u>."[30] It is a deeply, passionately interested quest, arising more in dissatisfaction and anxiety than in wonder. It seeks not simply to know more, but to be more. It arises from the inner awakening of the fundamental passion of reason (as distinct from

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[28]PE, p. 14.

[29]VdW, p. 35: cf. pp. 871-902.

[30]Samay, p. 4. This, as Samay notes, is the thesis of Gabriel Marcel's previously cited interpretative essay on Jaspers' thought.

understanding or consciousness-in-general) and of Existenz or freedom.[31]

It is inseparably the drive to know and the will to be - - the

deep and restless passion of the self "to think, to act, to live

so that salvation" will be attained.[32]

Thus the basic situation which constitutes the point of

departure for Jaspers' foundational thinking already involves an

inner and transcending movement of thought. The starting point

is not automatically apparent and cannot be demonstrated objectively.

It rests, rather, upon that inner awakening and transforming of the

self which is at once an awareness of the fragmentation and dark-

ness of the human situation and a quest for that which overcomes

fragmentation and darkness. The polarity of subject and object,

of self and world, around which all of Jaspers' thinking is

structured is already plainly in evidence, as is also that

tension between situatedness in the world (in the polarity of

subject and object) and quest somehow beyond the world which

provides the dynamic for that thinking. It is already clear, too,

that the real center of Jaspers' thought is that inner source or

force which is constitutive of the (autonomous) human self. As

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[31]Jaspers' term "Existenz" will hopefully be clarified
in subsequent discussing of the foundational thinking. It
stands in contrast to Dasein, which Jaspers uses to mean
"empirical (human) existence" - - getting and spending, knowing
and doing. Consistent with the practice of Jaspers' translators,
it is here left untranslated, just as Jaspers himself did not
attempt a translation into German when he took the term from
Kierkegaard's Danish.

[32]PFR, pp. 5-6. Cf. VdW, pp. 356, 965.

Marcel observes, "for Jaspers it is only in the level of possible

existence /Existenz/ that a passion is engendered which causes

the question of being in itself to issue into an act which

transcends all objectivity."[33]

B. The Critical Turn

Yet if the anthropocentric turn constitutive of contemporary

thought is already evident in the starting point of Jaspers' founda-

tional thinking, it becomes, as critical turn, the explicit content

of the first step taken from that point of departure. For while he

calls upon the great traditions of religion and thought to evoke

the basic situation, Jaspers moves immediately thereafter to those

"new conditions constitutive of present life and thought" for

further clarification of that situation. Thus while foundational

thinking begins with the awakening of basic questions, it continues

not in direct pursuit of an answer to those questions but by

critical reflection on the questions themselves.[34] It was possible

for traditional philosophy to be "both naive and truthful" in the

direct pursuit of metaphysics, but those new conditions outlined

in the previous chapter and referred to collectively as the rise

of critical consciousness preclude such directness.[35] It is, in

fact, only in the failure of such pre-critical pursuit of

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[33]Op. cit., p. 232.

[34]"The question is: What is being? The question to this
question is: how can I and how must I think of being?" VdW, p. 37.

[35]PE, pp. 16-17.

fundamental questions that critically conscious and truthful
philosophy (and religion) can arise today.[36]

Such critical consciousness is manifest, of course, in
various forms. It is present most generally in the diffuse climate
of skepticism and doubt characteristic of the present crisis. It
is present more specifically and more fundamentally in the rise of
historical consciousness and the corresponding loss of the sense of
world as nature, as purposeful whole (cosmos and telos) within
which man might ultimately find bearings, albeit after great
wrestling with the fundamental questions. Thus the world has
come to seem not just provisionally fragmented, but fundamentally
disenchanted. The endless diversity of indifferent objects into
which man is thrown remains silent. It mediates no presence,
holds no echo of a word which might speak an answer to the crucial
questions arising from the human situation.[37] Such answers,
rather, arise in abundance from the realm of human history. Yet
the very plurality of the answers, or the heightened modern
consciousness of that plurality, casts critical doubt on the
possibility of any real answer and makes the basic questioning

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[36]Ph I, p. 45.

[37]As noted above, p. 66, nn. 67 and 68, Jaspers himself
does not so much focus on, as presuppose this shift in the
understanding of world from "world as nature" to "world as
history." Karl Löwith notes that the one thing which unites
the various philosophies grouped together as "existentialism"
is the "modern destiny" that "the physical universe . . . is
present only as the insignificant background of man's forlorn
existence" and "the negative experience that man has no definite
place and nature within the natural universe." The world for
such thinking is "our world . . . a world without nature."
Löwith, Nature, History, and Existentialism, pp. 103-104.

itself seem a futile exercise.

For Jaspers, this critical turn which brings the basic questions themselves into question receives its sharpest focus from the experience of modern science. Yet it is above all reflection on the character of that science which serves not simply to clarify the limits of knowledge, but actually to permit the recovery, with greater clarity than was previously possible, of those basic questions in which the transcending of thought and faith originates. The emergence of science, in other words, has forced a critical re-examination of the ways of knowing and seeking truth. The classical (western) differentiation of philosophy and theology has been expanded to the "modern tri-partition" of science, philosophy, and theology.[38] The result is not a negation of the possibility of philosophical and re-ligious truth, but a critical clarification of the nature or logic of that truth vis-à-vis scientific truth.

Jaspers' full discussion of science is lengthy and complex, and has been itself the subject of detailed study.[39] Essential for present purposes is, first of all, the realization that scientific knowing has inescapably or irreversibly become the normative paradigm of knowledge as such. To know fully is finally

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[38]PFR, p. 50.

[39]Cf. Ph I, pp. 120-225; RAR, pp. 7-37; OGH, pp. 81-95; and the article "Philosophy and Science" in WW, pp. 147-167. On Jaspers' understanding of science, cf. James Collins, "Jaspers on Science and Philosophy" in Schilpp, pp. 115-140, and Samay, pp. 71-135.

to know scientifically. This is not, of course, to deny the
knowledge given in the immediate experience and enjoyment of
present and particular realities.[40] Yet the human drive to
truth pushes beyond such immediacy in quest of cogent certainty
and universal validity regarding the regularities and inter-
connections of things and events. It pushes, in other words,
to rigorous inquiry by means of clearly defined methods in the
gathering and assessing of evidence. Thus "the aim of scientific
inquiry . . . is to bring the objective evidence to a clear
condition; where it imposes itself upon the impartial mind with
compelling force."[41] It is, in fact, the note of cogency (and
thus of universal, because cogent, validity) which Jaspers
stresses as the most central characteristic of scientific know-
ledge.[42] Yet he takes great pains to debunk the caricature
of absolute cogency purveyed by the popular misconception of
science as some monolithic (almost magical) system of
absolutely certain truths. Cogency remains an ideal which
guides scientific endeavor, but is in fact always relative
and limited.[43] It is the very ideal of cogency which requires

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[40]PFR, p. 51.

[41]Collins, p. 118. Cf. pp. 125-6: "the scientific
interest is to secure the maximum clarity, logical necessity,
universality, and communicability in its determinate object.
Scientific inquiry is guided by the ideal of rational objectiv-
ity, guaranteed by evidence that is universally valid and com-
pelling in a universal way."

[42]Ph I, pp. 123-127, 163-164. Cf. Samay, pp. 89-92.

[43]"I acquire cogent insight, but the cogency does not
become absolute." Ph I, p. 122; cf. pp. 123-126.

clarity and definiteness, attention to the differences in realms of knowing, and recourse to particular methods appropriate to particular realms of objects. And it is these characteristics of the actual sciences which stand in marked contrast to the myths of scientism.[44] There is no one Science. There are, rather, the various sciences in each of which the goal of cogency is achieved, or at best approached, by the methodological limitation of inquiry to particular, relative fields or perspectives or realms of objects. The significance of modern science is ."the idea of compelling, generally valid cognition proceeding by specific methods, progressing infinitely, but always particularly . . . ."[45]

If, then, scientific knowing is the normative paradigm for all knowledge because of its compelling, universal validity, it attains that character precisely because it is always and in principle limited. It is limited by always specific and diverse horizons of theory and method and by the consequent endlessness of possible inquiry which makes any unity or universal system

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[44]Jaspers traces those aberrations of science which claim the possibility (or the actual possession) of a completed system of total knowledge (Totalwissen) to that fascination with modern science which entered the realm of properly philosophic thinking above all through the influence of Descartes. Today, despite the significance of the sciences, accurate understanding of the nature of science is "exceedingly rare" while the various pseudo-scientific forms of supposed total knowledge are a pervasive danger. OGH, pp. 93-96; cf. RAR, passim.

[45]PFR, p. 31. OGH, p. 87: Science is "the real investigation of questions that are always determinate and particular."

of knowledge impossible.[46] More fundamentally, it is limited because "only that which is definite can become an object of our knowing."[47] Only that which appears or comes to focus in the forms and categories of thought can be known. In Jaspers' preferred Kantian terminology, only the phenomenal is knowable.[48] Thus while research makes "a presupposition of the knowability of the world," this presupposition is only correctly understood to mean "the knowability of objects in the world" and not "the knowability of the world as a whole."[49] The "world as a whole" is not only never attained in the endlessness of determinate inquiry, it cannot even be thought without contradictions. It is, rather, as Kant showed, a limit-concept or a regulative idea which serves to guide or lure the thrust of knowledge toward unity, but can never itself become an object of knowledge.[50] The world that can be known is the phenomenal realm of endlessly diverse objects. "All our knowing remains in the world and never attains the world . . . for our knowing the world is

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[46]OGH, pp. 83-87. Cf. Ph I, pp. 127-135.

[47]VdW, p. 97.

[48]PFR, p. 7; CT, p. 8. Thus the ground or source whence things appear is not itself knowable. We know beings, but not being. "To our cognition 'Being in itself' is a boundary concept, not an object." PFR, p. 7. It is important to note that at this point Jaspers moves from a description of scientific knowing to a philosophical (Kantian) interpretation of the nature of knowledge.

[49]VdW, p. 96. Cf. OGH, p. 94.

[50]VdW, pp. 96 ss.

fragmented (Zerissen)."51

Thus clarity about the nature and significance of science — —
what Jaspers calls the "universal scientific approach" or the
"scientific attitude" (Wissenschaftlichkeit) as distinct from the
sciences themselves, and what is here more generally referred to
as "critical consciousness" — — leads to clarification of the basic
human situation and of those fundamental questions emerging in
that situation. Initially that clarification seems entirely
negative. The basic questions are not only unanswered, they
seem unanswerable. Any claim to know answers to such questions
about the human situation as a whole can today result only from
self-deception. It is no longer possible to be both "naive and
truthful." Critical clarification of the nature of knowledge
shows such basic questions to be limit questions, not simply
in the sense that they arise at the limits of specific, this-
worldly knowing and doing, but in the more fundamental sense
that they point beyond the boundaries of knowledge as such.
As far as we can know they are empty, indicating nothing but
our limitation to the objective realities of this world — —
"our imprisonment in appearance."52 They would seem as futile as
the quest for the invisible gardener in Flew's interpretation of

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51 CT, p. 7. While Jaspers can speak of "the real, rich,
glorious, and terrible world" (PFR, p. 7.), in fact the world as
knowable is finally the same fragmented endlessness which provoked
fundamental questions. It is reminiscent of Pascal's dark evoca-
tion of human life cast adrift in the infinities of space and time.
Cf. Löwith, Nature, History, and Existentialism, p. 103.

52PFR, p. 7.

that infamous parable[53] - - unanswerable in principle and thus logically meaningless despite the seeming significance with which they arise in the basic situation. In the darkness of that situation, then, the light kindled by the spark of the basic questions would be extinguished by the cold breath of criticism.

Yet unlike Flew, Jaspers' thinking does not terminate with this first critique of the basic questions. In fact, as noted above, it might be said to begin in earnest only with the initial failure of these questions. For with Kant, the denial of knowledge is a preliminary clarification which makes room for faith - - or, more accurately, for the possibility of freedom within which faith might arise. It destroys the misunderstanding whereby the basic questions are thought of as continuous with the quest for knowledge. Yet this disillusionment makes possible a shift or transformation of consciousness, an inner awakening whereby the basic questions may now be authentically appropriated as a quest for truth (Wahrheit) other than the correct and cogent truth (Richtigkeit) of knowledge.[54]

There is, of course, no proof, no universally compelling argument or evidence at this juncture in the critical turn of Jaspers' Grundgedanke. Thrown back upon oneself in the fragmented darkness of the world, without the security of clear and objective answers to one's fundamental questions, it may not be possible to make the pseudo-enlightened claim of positivism that the human

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[53]New Essays in Philosophical Theology, p. 96.

[54]PFR, p. 51.

situation as a whole is exhausted by the empirically knowable.
It is possible, however, to remain (with Flew) in an agnostic
stance. Indeed such a stance has the seeming honesty, even
nobility, of a clear-headed acceptance of limitation to the human
world of knowing and doing, and of refusal to lose oneself in
"endless theological controversy" or "metaphysical and mystical
nonsense." For Jaspers, however, it is precisely the refusal
made by such "passive agnosticism" which constitutes a loss of
oneself in the real endlessness of "knowing and doing."[55] Thus,
for instance, scientific knowing is, when taken by itself, an
absurd endlessness in the dual sense of a ceaseless _and_ purpose-
less accumulation of a more detailed and diverse knowledge.
Refusal to take seriously the fundamental questions which arise
in the face of such endlessness is not only a denial of that basic
will to unity and truth which is constitutive of science,[56] but as
such it is a denial of the self of the scientist, or of that human
depth in the self whence arise both that basic will to truth and
the consequent basic questions about the human situation.

- Equally possible at this juncture, of course, is the
existential exaltation of freedom or will in face of the world's
endlessness and the seeming unanswerability of the basic questions.
Jaspers' rejection of such existentialism has already been noted.
Purporting to rescue the self, the defiant claim to absolute

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[55]CT, pp. 8-9. Cf. Ph I, pp. 77-78.

[56]OGH, pp. 83-85.

autonomy leads in fact only to despair. It fragments the deepest self, turning freedom against reason, the will to self against the will to truth. Denying the claim of those basic questions wherein the self awakens to itself, it severs the root of human seriousness. "Absolute independence drives me to despair. I am aware that as flatly self-based I would have to sink into the void."[57]

Jaspers himself has been accused of such irrationalism championed in the face of the absolute limits of knowledge.[58] He would claim, however, that the critical clarification of knowledge leads not to the negation of reason, but to the opening of possibilities for reason deeper than those of knowledge. The basic situation is not changed. Rather the inner awakening given in that situation is radicalized. The basic questions can now be understood as existential questions not simply in the evident sense that they are questions of deeply personal concern, but in the more radical sense that they can only be answered by that depth of the self which Jaspers calls "Existenz." Said another way, the failure of knowledge and clarity about its immutable limits open the possibility of a different type of question and answer, a questing and finding which is not a matter of knowledge, though it is preeminently a matter of reason and truth, and also of

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[57]Ph III, p. 6; cf. Ph II, pp. 173-174.

[58]Peter Wust early characterized Jaspers' philosophy as an 'Entscheidungs Irrationalismus" in Ungewissheit und Wagnis (München: J. Kösel Verlag, 4 ed., 1946), pp. 273-284 (originally published in 1937).

freedom.[59] Thrown back upon oneself, without the security of objective knowledge, one is faced anew, yet with a clarity which makes it seem as though for the first time, with the basic questions. One is faced with the possibility of and need for decision — not about this or that, but about the ultimate significance of one's entire existence and the significance of reality as a whole. In such an awakening there is, Jaspers insists, the possibility of a non-cognitive, therefore non-cogent and not universalizable, but nonetheless true answer to the basic questions.[60] There is, in other words, the possibility of faith. It is, then, the elucidation of that possibility opened and clarified by the critical turn which constitutes the next step in Jaspers' foundational thinking.

Before taking that next step, however, it will be well to pause briefly since it is now possible to clarify somewhat further the way in which this foundational thinking was previously characterized. The possibility of truth opened in critical reflection upon the fundamental questions is not something which can be demonstrated or shown. It is, rather, a possibility which can be realized (brought to awareness as it is achieved) only in deed, in an inner

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[59]For Jaspers freedom is not arbitrariness or blind risk or "an imagined possession of absolute freedom." Rather "the substance of freedom is a pursuit of illumination." PFR, p. 6. Put somewhat differently, "reason and Existenz are not two opposed powers . . . Each exists only through the other. They mutually develop one another and find through one another clarity and reality." RE, p. 68.

[60]"The truth that makes itself felt at the boundary of science is infinitely more than scientific correctness." OMP, p. 148.

action or movement of self-realization which is an act of
freedom because of the absence of compelling knowledge. Neither
that which is intended in this action (the whole, or ground
sought in the basic questions), nor the source of the act (freedom
or Existenz) can be known.[61] Thus its possibility, while opened
in critical reflection and made an object for thought (but not
for cognition)[62] in the various patterns of thinking which seek
to elucidate, evoke, suggest, and even provoke it, is finally
given only in the free, personal act in which it is realized.
As act, moreover, it is never possessed finally in the way in which
knowledge might be said to be attained. It is, rather, always
only historic realization, ever again to be realized or reenacted.[63]

It becomes clearer, then, why Jaspers insists that his
foundational thinking is not a matter of ascertainable doctrine,
but a movement of thinking. Its communicable thoughts would
elucidate or suggest what cannot be known, only realized, and
that realization itself is an act, a moment in a movement

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[61]With Kant, Jaspers finds the world, the self, and God
all "beyond the limits of knowledge." The self which can become
an object of knowledge, of psychological knowledge for instance,
is not the never objectifiable depth of the self. That depth is
experienced, becomes present and thus is brought to awareness
(innewerden), only as ever historic action, as the exercise of
freedom. "I do not know what I am in the original transcending
to myself, but I come to the sense that 'I am.'" Ph I, p. 85;
cf. Ph II, pp. 26-42.

[62]Ph II, p. 3.

[63]It is, in Jaspers' suggestive alliteration, "Durchbruck,
nicht Dauer." VdW, p. 454; cf. pp. 710 ss.

of thought or, better yet, the action of the movement itself.
Foundational thinking, in other words, both as the communicable
thoughts and the inner action indicated and suggested in those
thoughts, is <u>transcending</u>, not in the ordinary sense that any
thought intends an object which transcends the thinking
subject, but in the more specific and fundamental sense that it
"means to go beyond objectiveness."[64] Yet thought cannot move
"beyond" objects of thought, except to that which becomes another
object of thought. Thus the movement of thought "beyond" itself
must return to, or better always remain within thought, within
the thinking of objects. It succeeds only insofar as it
constantly "circles," or moves as an endlessly dialectical
negation of itself which "stands on the boundary," "floating"
or "in suspension" (<u>schwebend</u>) between objectivity and the non-
objectifiable.[65] It succeeds, moreoever, not simply as the
movement of such thinking, which by itself would be vacuous.
"It will be true only if it is translated into concrete tran-
scending," only if it is accompanied by the "second wing" which
is personal Existenz.[66] (And conversely the "second wing" would
be blind without such thinking as the presence of the first:)

The <u>Grundgedanke</u> is already such transcending, although

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[64]Ph I, p. 77.

[65]Ph I, pp. 78, 80, 81.

[66]Ph I, p. 78.

perhaps not self-consciously, in the first awakening of basic
questions, and the dialectic of transcending continues through
the critical turn to the self-conscious awakening of Existenz
and the final affirmation of what Jaspers calls "transcendence."
"There is only one transcending," but that single action may be
said to have "three modes (which) not only follow one another,
but each subsequent one gives new meaning to the one before."[67]
Thus there is first of all the critical transcending of objectiv-
ity in clarification of the limits of knowledge and awareness
that the basic questions seek answers which are not possible
objects of knowledge. Even in this first mode, however, the
point of transcending "is not so much to test the inadequacy
of objective representations as to transform oneself . . . . .
It is an act upon oneself which makes a man another man . . . ."[68]
This inner transformation becomes focal in the second mode of
transcending, the elucidation of Existenz as the full awakening
of the possibility of quest and answer which are no longer matters
of knowledge. In its turn, then, that awakening already contains
the completion of transcending in its third mode, in affirmation
of that transcendence which is the ground of both objectivity and
Existenz. It is these latter two and inseparable modes of tran-
scending which are opened by the critical turn, and their elucida-
tion in thought is the subject of the next step in foundational

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[67]Ph I, pp. 77, 82.

[68]Dufrenne and Ricoeur, p. 51.

thinking (just as their realization in act, in possible Existenz,

is the object or goal of that thinking.)

C. Existenz and Transcendence

If the Grundgedanke is not empty speculation but

thinking as a real part of one's own life, then Existenz (the

"second wing") is already present in that thinking as the source

of basic questions and of the drive to the limits of knowledge,

just as transcendence is already present as the anticipated goal

of those questions and that drive. Yet Existenz is most fully,

or self-consciously present (the self comes most fully or deeply

to itself) in what Jaspers calls limit or boundary situations

(Grenzsituationen). Put somewhat differently, the self which

experiences definitive boundaries is not the practical self

of everyday activity nor the knowing self of object consciousness.

It is Existenz. And as Existenz in boundary situations it

stands, so to speak, always already before or in relation to

transcendence. "Thus to exist /Existenz/ and to find oneself

before transcendence are one and the same, just as to experience

boundary situations and to exist are the same."[69] In Jaspers'

discussion of boundary situations, then, the completion of this

typical pattern of his foundational thinking can be found.[70]

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[69]Welte, p. 46.

[70]Cf. Ph II, pp. 178-222. There clearly are many
differing elucidations of Existenz and transcendence throughout
the second and third volumes of Philosophy and throughout Von
der Wahrheit. The discussion of boundary situations is selected
here as illustrative, not exhaustive, because it is an aspect
of Jaspers' thinking which has become rather widespread in
contemporary thought.

For any human being, of course, to exist means to be in ever changing situations, to interact with one's situation, to move from one situation to another. Yet this general situatedness of existence is not the same as a boundary situation.

> /Boundary situations/ never change, except in
> appearance. There is no way to survey them in
> existence, no way to see anything behind them.
> They are like a wall we run into, a wall on
> which we founder.[71]

While we can change, even overcome particular situations by knowing and doing, boundary situations cannot be thus known, acted upon, and overcome. They are experienced as boundaries only by Existenz which is awakened in them. They are fully experienced, in other words, not by analysis which shows them to be inescapable limits "for all human beings," but by a leap or shift to a uniquely personal realization that they are _my_ boundaries, in which I realize the final powerlessness of _my_ thoughts and actions, and perceive the fundamental precariousness of existence as _my_ fate.[72]

The first and most fundamental of such boundary situations is the inescapability of situatedness as such - - not as some abstract principle but as the realization of _my_ concrete, historical, situatedness, _my_ determination in this particular situation, here not there, now not then, as man or woman, with these parents, this

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[71]Ph II, p. 178

[72]Ph II, p. 181. The need for and significance of
this shift in perspective cannot, of course, be demonstrated
to one who has not already experienced such a conversion.

heritage, this religion (or no religion), this language and culture. I act within these situations to know and change them. Yet it is precisely in such action that I experience my situatedness as a boundary, as inescapable, personal historicity. I remain ever determined and particular even as I transcend that determination at least in knowing that it is a boundary, "a wall we run into." I can, of course, reject this awareness and lose myself in getting and spending, knowing and doing. Or I can awaken to the strange mystery of myself, ever limited (imprisoned) in the narrow confines of my particularity, and thus face "the choice in which I accept or reject my definite existence as my own," in which I curse or love my fate.[73]

Within this fundamental boundary situation are other, particular boundary situations, each throwing me back upon the strange reality of my uniquely individual self and throwing that self into question. Thus the silent irreversibility of <u>death</u> is a boundary when actually experienced in the death of one I love or above all in the possibility of my death. So, too, <u>suffering</u> as my lot and constant companion becomes a boundary in its inevitability. And in action I experience both the absolute necessity of <u>struggle</u> and the unavoidability of <u>guilt</u>.[74] Nowhere in the world do I experience security or rest or harmony which is whole and unbroken.

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[73]Ph II, pp. 188, 192.

[74]For Jaspers' elucidation of these particular boundary situations, cf. Ph II, pp. 193-218.

> In every boundary situation, I have
> the ground pulled out from under my
> feet, so to speak. There is no solidly
> extant existence I might grasp as being.
> There is no perfection in the world . . . .
> the boundary situations everywhere show
> existence to be inherently dubious and
> brittle . . . .[75]

The "dubiousness and historicity" of all existence, then, is

the final, most general boundary situation revealed in all previous

boundaries. Jaspers refers to it as the "antinomic structure of

existence" where all completion is always partial and relative,

always countered by antithesis or negation: life by death, peace

by struggle, joy by hopeless misery.[76]

  Boundary situations, then, are a recapitulation of the

basic situation wherein foundational thinking originated. It is

the same fragmentation, darkness, and endless flux, but now

experienced more clearly as an absolute boundary ("like a wall

we run into") and, the same thing said differently, experienced

as my boundary ("a wall on which we founder"). I experience my

world, my existence, the only reality which is reality for me,

as ever precarious, and finally unreliable. I experience the

"constant threat" or "menace" which drives me "to seek security"

and, finding none, to face "this absolute failure, which if I

am honest I cannot fail to recognize."[77]

  Each of the major boundary situations described by

Jaspers is different, not simply reducible to an instance of a

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[75]Ph II, p. 218.

[76]Ph II, pp. 218-221.

[77]WW, pp. 21-22.

general type (in spite of their abbreviated presentation here).
And each is actually experienced as a boundary only by individuals,
in the uniqueness of their lives. Moreover, as already noted, the
actual experience is for Jaspers finally ineffable, not something
which can be known objectively.[78] Attempts to describe what happens
at the boundary will inevitably be faltering and different, drawing
upon ideas, categories, and comparisons from the realm of objective
thought and from the diverse languages peculiar to each particular
historic situation. Thus Jaspers' own discussion is itself, and
self-consciously, only one such attempt to point toward the reality
of transcending in boundary situations. The experience leads, he
says, if one does not flee from it, to an absolute parting of the
ways. "When boundary situations are experienced as such, there
are two possibilities: the way to nothing and the way to authentic
being."[79] I am led to a brink on which I founder, an abyss over
which I am suspended, and am faced there with the basic questions
which were never more totally my questions, questions about the
total significance of my life and of the endless reality in which
that life finds itself. I am faced, in other words, with a radical
decision: defiance or acceptance? absurdity or significance? nothing
or being?

At the juncture of this final decision, and it clearly
need be neither in fact nor description quite so dramatic as both

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[78]Ph II, p. 178. "There is no way to survey them in
existence, no way to see behind them." To know a boundary would
already be to stand outside or beyond it, in which case it would
not be an absolute boundary.

[79]VdW, p. 880.

brevity and Jaspers' hortatory style make it seem,[80] two things

are said to happen (or one thing with two inseparable aspects

is realized). Existenz comes fully to itself, yet only by or in

relation to transcendence. I realize myself in an unsurpassable

manner as original, not defined by or in the world (although

realized only in the world), as unique destiny. I realize myself

in freedom, because this depth of individuality is manifest

finally in the moment of decision without necessity or support.

Yet I realize myself precisely as restless depth ever seeking its

transcendence (or else I would not come to myself at the boundary).

And I come to assurance about self-being in awareness that I am

not my own ground, but that I and all of reality are indeed

grounded. In coming to myself on the path of freedom I come to

awareness "that I do not have myself alone to thank for my

freedom either."[81] Rather "Existenz can grasp itself in its own

freedom, only if at the same time, and in the same act, it will

perceive something other than itself."[82]

Jaspers' formulations at this absolutely central point

are startlingly simple and straightforward. No proof is possible;

no argument is attempted. The truth as he sees it is stated clearly,

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[80]Cf., for instance, his more detailed elucidation of the
"original notion" leading to this decisive point in Ph II, pp. 228-
240. It would seem, moreover, that this decisive point might well
arrive and be met in a brief pause, an utterly simple act, the quiet
recall of assent or resolve in the midst of daily life and attention
to very ordinary, little things.

[81]Ph III, p. 5.

[82]Ph III, p. 5.

almost dogmatically. In coming to self at the moment of absolute
decision one affirms oneself as grounded, as having received oneself,
as self related to transcendence, and thus one simultaneously
affirms the reality of transcendence as transcendence (as always
other, as that which is but not as what it is). Cases which would
seem to contradict this affirmation are understood as being, in fact,
covert instances of it. The suicide ultimately affirms the
radically other by his total and absolute rejection of present
reality.[83] So, too, affirmations of "the way of nothing" are
dialectical assertions of the complete otherness of being.[84]
And the attempt to ground freedom in itself destroys freedom.

> The test of the possibility of my Existenz
> is the knowledge that it rests upon tran-
> scendence. I close the door to my becoming
> Existenz if I take it for being proper. . . .
> I cannot take freedom for the ultimate. . . .
> Confined to itself, even freedom withers . . . . .
> Existenz is either in relation to tran-
> scendence or not at all.[85]

Again, no proof is possible. The assertion itself is but
an invitation to enter into the movement of this transcending
thinking, an invitation to experience an answer to the basic
questions in the ever momentary affirmation given at the
culmination of that movement, at the boundary.

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[83] Yet Jaspers' understanding of suicide is not
simplistic. Cf. Ph II, pp. 262-273.

[84] VdW, p. 881. Jaspers' understanding of Buddhism,
for instance, is very similar to those who find its assertion
of absolute emptiness (śûnya) an affirmation of absolute tran-
scendence. Cf. PER, pp. 265-268; GP:O, pp. 416-433 (on Nagarjuna)
and T.R.V. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (London:
George Allen and Unwin, 1960).

[85] Ph III, pp. 6-7; cf. PE, pp. 25-6.

D. Faith

Foundational thinking, then, culminates in an affirmation of transcendence. Better said, it culminates in the "fulfilled absolute consciousness" of Existenz as assurance of self in relation to transcendence.[86] Such consciousness is, in some of Jaspers' many suggestive indications, love, absolute trust, fundamental assurance, awareness, and ascertainment. It is, in the designation which is most central for Jaspers' thought, faith as "love's explicit, conscious certainty of being."[87] Foundational thinking, then, culminates in faith.[88]

Such faith, as the platitude will have it, stands in contrast to knowledge. Yet the contrast is misunderstood if taken to mean that faith is beyond knowledge as its completion or before knowledge as its postulate or presupposition. Faith receives no

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[86]Jaspers' elucidation of absolute consciousness follows and completes that of boundary situations. Cf. Ph II, pp. 223-254. Absolute consciousness is not "consciousness of an object," nor is it "experience as an object of psychology." It is, rather, "something that I experience actively in my own self-ascertainment as fulfilled freedom, but I never have it before me as what it is." It is "not the being of Existenz, but its self-assurance" because "it is for Existenz the assurance of being." Ph II, pp. 223-225.

[87]Ph II, p. 243. Cf. PSP, p. 17: "Faith . . . is the existential act by which transcendence becomes conscious in its actuality."

[88]Reference to faith typically abounds throughout Jaspers' writings. For explicit discussions of faith, cf. especially Ph I, pp. 255-262; Ph II, pp. 243-246; OGH, pp. 215-228; and above all PSP (German title Der philosophische Glaube), pp. 1-46. In the already cited book by Leonard Ehrlich, Karl Jaspers: Philosophy As Faith, faith is, with much justice, taken as the central notion for interpreting Jaspers' thought.

vision of the supersensory which completes knowledge.[89] Neither is faith some (a priori) necessary and universal condition of the possibility of knowledge or consciousness.[90] Yet faith does come after knowledge in the sense that experience of the limits of knowledge awakens the possibility of faith. And it is prior to all objectification and mediation in the sense that it is original. It arises from an origin within and not as a consequence of something else (whether reasons or will).[91]

Nor should the contrast of knowledge and faith be understood as an antithesis, as if faith constituted an irrational alternative to or denial of knowledge. On the contrary both knowledge and faith arise in the one will to truth which is reason, and reason is indispensible to faith as it is inseparable from Existenz.[92] Reason is goad and guide in the transcending motion of faith. It forbids resignation and forgetfulness of basic questions, presses to the limits of knowledge, rejects

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[89]Jaspers continually struggles against mysticism, whether as wordless union "out of this world" or as (consequent?) vision received "in this world." Cf. PFR, pp. 264, 279-281; Ph II, pp. 182, 244, 277 ss.; Ph III, 169 ss. Ehrlich, pp. 40-56.

[90]Jaspers sides with Kierkegaard in the latter's critique of this notion in both Schleiermacher and Hegel. While he would surely grant the presence of a vital (animal?) confidence as a condition for knowing and doing, faith is neither generalized nor necessary, but always historic and free. Cf. PSP, pp. 9-10.

[91]Ph II, pp. 243, 245.

[92]What Jaspers says of philosophy as one form of faith is true more generally of faith as such: "Philosophy does not live by reason alone, but it can take no step without it" (RE, p. 131). The inseparability of reason and Existenz is the central theme of the lectures by that title (Reason and Existenz). Cf., especially, pp. 67-68.

preliminary or pseudo-answers, and drives to the depth and unity
of truth which is transcendence. The passion of self-being which
is Existenz would lose itself in blind self-assertion or fanatical
ideology without the continued presence of reason as its polar
complement. Faith as the consciousness of realized Existenz is
thus impossible without reason.[93]

Faith and knowledge are contrasted, then, because they
are finally incommensurate. Where knowledge is attained as
necessity and retained as possession, the shift at the limits of
knowledge to the possibility of faith opens a realm, so to speak,
of freedom and historicity. Faith is attained in an inner, free
act of transcending. It is not retained at all, but is an always
momentary breakthrough as the consciousness of (ever-again-to-be-
enacted) Existenz wherein the transcendent other through which man
exists is disclosed. Thus it is an answer to the basic quest, but
an answer given only in the continuing search "where this depth
has opened and the search as such has become a finding."[94]
While Jaspers will even at times speak of this answer as a

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[93]Cf. PSP, pp. 42-45.

[94]Ph III, p. 4. Clearly the answer of faith is not
a permanent possession, but neither is it an absurd glorification
of merely endless searching as in Lessing's parable where man
chooses "the ever-active search for truth" (even on condition
of endless failure) rather than "pure truth" which belongs to
God alone. Jaspers' position seeks a via media between these
extremes. Thus Tilliette (p. 60) errs in equating Jaspers and
Lessing.

"revelation,"[95] and more generally as a gift or something received, it is a revelation of transcendence, of an answer which always remains other, beyond our grasp. Transcendence, as transcendence, can only be actually affirmed in continuing search, in the movement of transcending awareness which is faith. In the very failure of the search to find an answer "the search as such has become a finding" of that which truly transcends. (Any other answer would constitute in fact a negation of transcendence.)

Since, moreover, boundaries are absolute and transcendence that which really transcends, man remains always within boundaries - - in the world. "It is in existence only that I come to be sure of myself, and thus of transcendence."[96] The language of transcending does not mean transcending to another realm or another self (the ghost within the machine), for any assertion of such another realm would contradict the very idea of transcendence. It would constitute an objectification of that which cannot be objectified. There is, rather, only this world - - existence - - and insofar as Existenz and transcendence are affirmed, they are affirmed in the transformation of this world, as depth or "vanishing presence" which comes to appearance in the critical relativizing or

[95]Ph II, p. 247. Generally, however, despite his avoidance of fixed terminology, he reserves the term "revelation" to a religious, even exclusively Christian context. Cf. OGH, p. 226; PFR, pp. 8-10, 15-37.

[96]Ph II, p. 106. "Dasein" is the German word which Jaspers here and elsewhere uses, in contrast to "Existenz," for referring to concrete, this-worldly human "existence."

suspending of knowledge and object consciousness. And faith, too, as consciousness of this transformation (or as the reality of transformed consciousness) is realized only in existence. It awakens only in thought and action and comes to expression only in the categories of thought and action. In other words, what is realized at the boundary as _faith_ comes to expression (returning, so to speak, from the boundary) in categories of thought and action as _belief_. While it is in principle true that subsequent to the negative movement of transcending, and yet "prior to all objectification, possible Existenz has a sense of transcendence,"[97] it is also true that the movement of thought cannot be arrested at a theoretical still point. It must find positive expression in the world, in forms of objectification - - above all in the great historic forms of religion and thought, by way of vision in art, poetry, story and song, and by way of speculation in the constructions of philosophy and theology.[98] The inescapable objectifications of faith are clearly not knowledge. They cannot be identified with that which they express.[99] Yet they are the indispensable medium of transcending faith - - in which it moves, from which it springs, and to which it returns (to spring again). Thus faith, as culmination of Jaspers' foundational thinking,

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[97]Ph II, p. 244.

[98]Ph II, pp. 244, 246-247. Faith is inseparable from "contents of faith." It is always "faith in something." Cf. PSP, pp. 8, 24-46.

[99]Jaspers' essential protestantism is articulated in his continual return to "the rule of transcendence: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any false image or likeness.'" PFR, p. 136; cf. PSP, p. 80.

recapitulates the dialectical tension characteristic of the
entire movement of that thinking. It remains "rooted in the
vehicle of phenomenality" and thus, paradoxically, is an "always
mediated, forever new immediacy."[100]

Such, then, in relatively brief overview, is a typical
pattern of Jaspers' foundational thinking. The logic, or the
basic structure and movement of that thinking has already been
highlighted. Still, for reasons of both completeness and
fidelity to Jaspers' text, it would not be well to leave this
typical pattern without reference to the ideas with which
Jaspers himself in his philosophical logic summarizes and
schematizes that structure.[101] The following brief presenta-
tion of those ideas, then, which makes no pretense of adequacy,
might perhaps serve to provide a concluding image for the
central movement and direction of Jaspers' foundational thinking.

Jaspers begins with "an ancient philosophical insight,
definitively clarified by Kant," that reality for us is phenomenal - -
that it is real insofar as it becomes an object for us, and thus

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[100]PSP, pp. 9, 11.

[101]VdW, pp. 29-222. Cf. PFR, pp. 61-91; PSP, pp. 11-19;
RE, pp. 51-76; PE, pp. 15-29; and WW, pp. 28-38. The "basic
philosophical knowledge" developed in these first sections of
the philosophical logic, especially the central ideas sketched
here, are Jaspers' Grundgedanke in the narrower sense - - the
logical groundwork or framework of his own Philosophie, the
framework within which he hoped diverse faiths might meet in
this age of crisis. The full significance of the framework,
however, is found only in the details of the foundational think-
ing sketched above which it recapitulates and without which it
would seem, one fears, a mere tour de force.

that the subject-object dichotomy (or split) is a finally
unsurpassable basis of consciousness.[102] (It is the basic
human situation understood in terms of consciousness.) All
is real for us only as it appears in consciousness or, what is
the same, enters into the dichotomy of subject and object.
"What does not enter into this dichotomy is for us like non-
being."[103] Yet by the same token, whatever becomes an object
for us is appearance and not, to use Kant's phrase, das Ding
an sich. In Jaspers' own terms, awareness of the subject-
object dichotomy means simultaneously awareness of the
phenomenality of all things ("imprisonment in phenomenality"),
awareness that whatever appears can only be a particular form
or appearance of being, something determinate, never that which
really encompasses (or grounds) both subject and object. What
is, as being itself, cannot be an object (for a subject) any more
than it could be a subject (as consciousness of an object).
Rather, "authentic being that is neither object nor subject, but
that is manifested in the whole of the subject-object dichotomy"
Jaspers calls "the encompassing" (das Umgreifende).[104] It is

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[102]PFR, pp. 7, 61. Jaspers' word is "Spaltung," which
literally means "cleavage" or "split" and thus carries the impli-
cation of original unity. For convenience, I have followed the
general practice of Jaspers' translations in using the word
"dichotomy" which retains somewhat the implication of estrange-
ment that might be lost entirely in speaking only of a "polarity."

[103]PFR, p. 61.

[104]PSP, p. 28. Jaspers does not use the term "horizon"
since any horizon is a limited or relative whole. The encompassing,
rather, is that "further behind the horizon which is continually
manifest where there is an horizon" and which "encloses every
attained horizon without itself being a horizon." VdW, p. 38.

"that which, split into subject and object, becomes appearance."[105]
It is, in a metaphor Jaspers employs only slightly less frequently
than the figure of something encompassing, the source or origin
(Ursprung) whence the split of subject and object arises.[106]

Of course awareness of the subject-object dichotomy
and thus of phenomenality and the encompassing - - real awareness
as distinct from an idle repetition of formulae - - is already
the result of "intellectual operations which transcend the limits
of the knowable. . . ."[107] And such operations, whatever their
specific content or context, all involve a turnabout in thinking
(Umwendung) which Jaspers calls "the basic philosophical operation"
(philosophische Grundoperation).[108] Thus any thinking which arises
as basic questions in search of ultimate truth or reality or being
will necessarily involve this basic operation "which is to ascertain
the encompassing by transcending the object within the object
thinking that remains forever inevitable. . . ."[109]

> From the subject-object split, in which we
> aim at objects and are tied to them, this
> operation accomplishes the turnabout into
> the encompassing that is neither object
> nor subject, but contains both.[110]

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[105]PFR, p. 61.

[106]Cf. PFR, p. 69; VdW, pp. 26, 158-159.

[107]PSP, pp. 30-31. The whole discussion here quite evidently
presupposes an awakening to basic questions and critical clarification
whereby the subject-object dichotomy is experienced as a basic, indeed
an absolute boundary.

[108]VdW, pp. 37-42; PFR, pp. 76-79; PSP, pp. 17-19.

[109]PSP, p. 17.

[110]PGO, p. 132 (=PFR, p. 77).

To think the encompassing, of course, means to bring "it" within the subject-object dichotomy and thus to negate it as encompassing. Yet awareness of this contradiction compels one immediately to negate the result (the objectified thought of an encompassing reality) by repeating the basic operation of thinking beyond the subject and object. Thus the basic philosophical operation achieves no results. It is, rather, a constantly to be repeated dialectical process whereby "the realm of the objective must remain in motion, must evaporate as it were, so that as the object vanishes a fulfilled consciousness of being is made clear by this very vanishing."[111] It is, in other words, the central motion or act of transcending thinking.

Still, if awareness of the encompassing as encompassing is realized only in the critical operation or movement of thinking which turns back upon itself, even that self-critical awareness must take objective form ("the ambiguity of the objectified non-objectiveness"[112]) by being thought of "either as though it could become an object, or . . . as though it were the subject, visualized as an object. We have no other alternative."[113] Thus in his attempt to think the encompassing Jaspers elucidates various modes whereby we, in the dichotomy of subject and object, are encompassed -- various basic experiences or basic, irreducibly original ways in which we are, so to speak, present in the dichotomy of subject and

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[111]PSP, p. 18.

[112]PFR, p. 78.

[113]PFR, p. 61.

object and thus, correlatively, in which the encompassing is present as ground or source.[114] Such elucidation is not a deduction of modes from some one, essentially understood encompassing, nor does it make any claim to completeness.[115] It is, rather, an attempt to clarify basic experiences of being encompassed, and becomes compelling only in such clarification.[116]

Jaspers' discussion of the various modes of the encompassing is in itself a major and quite lengthy exercise in transcending thinking.[117] Its details are at times perplexing and at times fascinating as he outlines first the various "immanent modes" of encompassing, whether conceived subjectively as empirical existence (Dasein), consciousness-at-large (Bewusstsein überhaupt), and mind (Geist), or objectively as world, and then the "transcendent modes," again conceived both subjectively and objectively as Existenz and transcendence ("the encompassing of all encompassing"). Yet however much such detail might be necessary for a complete understanding of Jaspers' philosophical logic, it is not as such essential for the topic of religious truth. What is essential, and what has hopefully been reiterated in somewhat different and summary fashion by this brief mention of "the basic philosophical operation," is the basic

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[114]PFR, p. 69.

[115]It is not ontology, but "periechontology" -- Jaspers' coinage for thought about the encompassing (Gk., periechon). Cf. VdW, pp. 158-161; PFR, p. 75.

[116]PFR, p. 69: "We must feel each mode, yield to it, awaken to it."

[117]Cf. VdW, pp. 45-113; PFR, pp. 61-69. What is summarized here is evidently just an empty list without the suggestive detail of these original texts.

movement _within_ boundaries _beyond_ them in which ultimate truth is affirmed in faith.

2.

Most of what needs to be said at this point about Jaspers' understanding of religious truth has already been dealt with either explicitly or implicitly in the preceeding discussion of his _Grundgedanke_. Thus a brief resume will serve to highlight the characteristics of that understanding of truth most directly related to the question of religious pluralism.

The central point at issue, of course, is Jaspers' assertion that as a result of or, better yet, in the process of such foundational thinking "the very meaning of truth undergoes a change."[118] Truth can no longer be limited to the truth of knowledge. Rather "truth that is vitally important to us begins precisely where the cogency of cognitive consciousness ends."[119] Such non-cognitive truth is commonly called "existential truth," but Jaspers often prefers to speak variously of "absolute truth," the "truth of Existenz," "transcendent truth," or most simply "truth" (_Wahrheit_) in its fullest sense which is "infinitely more than scientific correctness (_Richtigkeit_)."[120] And for Jaspers it is the possibility of such truth which today opens the way for an authentic reappropriation of traditional faiths and for the

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[118]Ph I, p. 85. Cf. OMP, p. 140: "The meaning of _truth_ assumes another value."

[119]PE, p. 36 (my translation of _Bewusstsein überhaupt_).

[120]OMP, p. 148.

affirmation of a possible plurality of true faiths as a context where those faiths might meet and communicate.

When Jaspers asserts that in foundational thinking "the very meaning of truth undergoes a change," he does not mean simply to say that in addition to cognitive truth there is now another type of truth, the truth of Existenz. His view is more complicated and interesting than that. In fact he describes a different sense of truth for each of the four subjectively conceived modes of encompassing.[121] Thus while truth is cogent correctness for the encompassing of consciousness-at-large, it is pragmatic or vital utility for empirical existence, conviction and the relative wholeness of ideas for Geist, and the unconditionality or absoluteness of faith for Existenz.[122] (And only in the mode of consciousness-at-large is universality a criterion of truth!)

Yet these different types of truth, although finally irreducible one to another because of the irreducibility for us of the various modes of the encompassing, do not simply stand unrelated side by side. Rather they overlap and interrelate in various ways, each being comparable to others at different points

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[121]Cf. RE, p. 77: "In each of these modes being and truth have a distinct sense." RE, p. 80: "Truth is not of one sort, single and unique in its meaning. It has as many senses as there are modes of communication in which it arises. For what truth is is determined by the character of the encompassing within which communication takes place."

[122]Cf. VdW, pp. 601-653 for details and PE, pp. 33-41 for a summary presentation.

and all, finally, "in conflict: in possible reciprocal assaults upon one another."[123] Such conflict originates in the basic will to truth which is a will to the unity of truth, to the idea of the one truth, or the oneness of truth, which is given with our most fundamental sense of truth. This ideal of the one truth involves the tendency to conflict whereby each mode of truth seeks to establish its primacy by exclusion of the others. (Witness the pseudo-scientific scientism of our day.) Yet it simultaneously provides another instance of the by now familiar dynamic of Jaspers' thought. In this instance the irreducible plurality of types of truth (and not just a plurality of claims within the same type of truth, as in a plurality of religious truths) constitutes an absolute boundary which becomes a spring-board for movement to the unity of truth in transcendence. Given the persistence of plurality, the quest for (and assertion of) unity is paradoxical. It is the basic paradox which governs all of Jaspers' thought about truth: in time "we do not and will not have the one truth - - yet the truth can only be one."[124]

Among the various types of truth, however, the truth of knowledge or truth in the encompassing of consciousness-at-

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[123]PE, p. 41. Cf. VdW, pp. 654-709 and PE, pp. 41-61 for fuller discussion of the interrelation of the various types of truth and the quest for the unity of the one truth.

[124]VdW, p. 839. Cf. PFR, p. 83. Jean Wahl calls this the great "antimony" of unity and plurality in Jaspers' understanding of truth. La Pensée de l'Existence, pp. 103 ss.

large has a certain primacy at least insofar as all types of

truth must come to thought and expression in the medium of such

consciousness (as, too, thought about truth occurs only within

this medium). Thus it is, as the Grundgedanke plainly shows,

above all by means of contrast with cognitive truth that

Jaspers clarifies the possibility of that truth of faith which

is throughout his primary concern. When all is said and done,

it is still this contrast which is crucial for Jaspers' thought.[125]

> Truth is either universally valid and
> identical for everyone - - this is the
> type of scientific truth, which is
> always relative, however, true only
> for certain objects and under certain
> conditions, established by and related
> to certain methods. Or it is an abso-
> lute truth, by which the believer lives
> and realizes himself, but at the price
> that its statements, as rationally
> communicable tenets of faith, are not
> universally valid for all men. Abso-
> lute truth is historic, in other words,
> because we as possible Existenz are
> historic.[126]

Such absolute truth is, as already noted, not simply

different from the truth of knowledge, but is made possible precisely

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[125]It could probably be argued that discussion of the
four types of truth and their interrelations, however interesting
in itself, serves primarily to safeguard against the reductionistic
consequences usually involved in a bifurcation of truth into
cognitive and existential truths. Jaspers entire life's work
may with justice be understood as a continual struggle against
precisely such pervasive reduction whereby the most important
truth becomes merely an affair of the heart (in contrast to the
head) or a matter of private values (in contrast to hard facts).
Whether the content of his thought enables him to succeed in
this intention is, of course, the central critical question
about his philosophy.

[126]PW, p. 150.

by the latter's impossibility or limitation. "It is the absence
of objective knowledge which is the condition of our freedom."[127]
In the absence of constraints, freedom is possible. In the
absence of supports and guarantees, in the constant dialectical
motion where thought is suspended, so to speak, on the hyphen
between "both" and "and" (or "neither" and "nor"), freedom may
act absolutely or unconditionally. And in the absence of
objective mediations, such unconditional action constitutes
not only self-realization but mediation of transcendence. It
is the inner spark struck amidst external darkness, by whose
dim light ultimate truth is affirmed.

Absolute truth, then, contrasts with the truth of
knowledge not only because of the incompatibility of knowledge
and freedom, but because such freedom is the point of contact
with transcendence which is equally incompatible with knowledge.
Absolute truth, in other words, is transcendent truth: the truth
of transcendence attained in the motion of human transcending
precisely as that which ever transcends human grasp.[128] Thus it

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[127]Jean Wahl, La Pensee de l'Existence, p. 96. For
Jaspers, as for Kant, the incompatibility of knowledge and
freedom is a central premise of ethics and of religion. Ethics
is possible only where freedom is not determined by nature,
and religion is possible only where God has not "enslaved" man
by the direct revelation of his presence. Jaspers, of course,
also draws upon Kierkegaard's reflections on this incompatibility.
Cf. Jean Wahl, "Notes on Some Relations of Jaspers to Kierkegaard
and Heidegger," in Schilpp, pp. 393-400.

[128]Note Jaspers' paradoxical formula: "The truth . . .
before all truth and more than all truth is the divinity." VdW,
p. 461.

is always historic in the sense that it is realized in action,
in a moment in the motion of transcending, and in the correlative
sense that it is realized in forms which themselves (objectively)
remain historically relative vehicles, never identifiable with
the transcendence attained in them.[129]

Here again, then, is the basic paradox governing Jaspers'
thought about truth, this time in a form directly relevant to the
discussion of religious pluralism. The truth of transcendence can
only be one, yet transcendent truth is realized historically and
thus its very realization prohibits universalization of the form
of that realization. In different words, the transcending aware-
ness of faith affirms absolutely the truth of the absolute
(transcendence). Such affirmation must, moreover, take on specific
historical form since Existenz remains always in existence. And
while this necessity governs all faith, it is most clearly true
for religious faith which, as already noted, is distinguished from
philosophical faith by its eminently _positive_ character.[130] Thus
precisely because it is affirmed as the truth of the absolute

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[129]PW, p. 150. Jaspers' position here can be contrasted
with an understanding of "existential truth" in terms of which
the incompatibility of the truth of knowledge and existential
truth is only provisional, not final. On this view, freedom or
subjectivity is seen as the sole way to the ascertainment of
transcendent truth. Certain things can be known only in certain
ways, but they can be _known_. Thus what is understood and affirmed
existentially is not historic. It is finally and objectively and
thus universally true. Jaspers might well respond to this suggestion
with an image from Kierkegaard: the dancer, superb when he leaps,
is farcical when he attempts to fly, and tragic, too, since he
soon forgets how to leap.

[130]Cf. Ph I, p. 296 ss; PSP, p. 78 ss; R, p. 779.

(transcendence), its historic form cannot be proclaimed as exclusively (universally) true. On the other hand, because that which is affirmed is and can be affirmed absolutely only in some particular form, that form and only that form can be affirmed as true.

Strictly speaking, then, Jaspers does not assert a plurality of absolute, transcendent truths. Such an assertion would contradict the logic of existential affirmation. Yet as that logic precludes the claim to universality for what one affirms absolutely, it must allow the possibility of other such affirmations. Thus Jaspers can and does assert the possibility of a plurality of such truths. When speaking loosely, he at times adopts a language which has today become quite common - - speaking of different faiths as so many paths to God or of "the deity which does not show the same features to all men."[131] Such statements, however, remain a shorthand for his more carefully nuanced position, and cannot be taken to mean that the philosopher (or anyone else) in observing the variety of faiths "from the outside," so to speak, is somehow able to know that many are true (because he knows the one truth they all share or manifest or symbolize). Plurality and absolute truth are not contradictory, yet the logic which allows that assertion prohibits the actual assertion of a plurality of true faiths. The actual assertion of

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[131]Ph-III, p. 107. Cf. PSP, p. 113.

transcendent truth remains an ever historic act of individual Existenz.

As regards religious truth and plurality, then, Jaspers' conclusion is obvious. Religion and philosophy, as the two fundamental paths of faith, are not reducible to some common form, some unifying foundational truth, any more than different religions in their diversity are reducible to some general, shared religious faith. Yet both are subject to the same fundamental conditions clarified by Jaspers' foundational thinking. In terms of those conditions it is no longer possible to be "both naive and truthful." Thus religious statements can no longer claim the status of knowledge, of something universally true. They can be true, rather, as forms and expressions of absolute truth, as uniquely historic and irreplaceable realizations of existential faith. Where religious truth has not previously been understood in such terms, its self-understanding must be transformed if it is to remain truthful.[132] In terms of such a transformed understanding of religious truth, however, a possible plurality of true religions can be straightforwardly asserted as the resolution to the problem of pluralism and truth.

[132]Jaspers has no illusions that his call for this transformation will be met with great enthusiasm by orthodox believers. The entire polemic of Philosophical Faith and Revelation is aimed at orthodox resistance to such change. The change itself can only be a monumental historic process. Thus speaking of the West he suggest that "the substance of the biblical faith will undergo so radical a change of language, preaching, and living practice that to the captives of traditional forms it may look like the end of ecclesiastic religion." PFR, p. 321.

3.

Yet this conclusion, while it follows directly from
Jaspers' foundational thinking and would indeed seem to resolve
the dilemma posed by contemporary consciousness of religious
pluralism, is not without serious difficulties - - difficulties,
moreover, which finally extend to the most basic elements of
that foundational thinking. For Jaspers' discussion of the logic
of faith, precisely because it attempts to deal systematically
with the deeper currents of contemporary thought, takes one to
the center of today's most fundamental and controversial issues.[133]
While fuller consideration of these difficulties must for the
moment be deferred, some brief indications will serve to sharpen
the point of questions raised rather tentatively in the preceding
chapter and thus to focus the issue which must be taken up in the
next chapter in order to flesh out the sketch of Jaspers' approach
to the question of religious pluralism and truth which has been
presented thus far.

The possibility of a basic contradiction in Jaspers'
thought between intention and performance was already raised at the
end of the last chapter. His intention as regards religious truth

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[133]Such issues concerning the nature of knowledge, the
knowledge of nature, and the separation of freedom from knowledge
and nature in the idea of history have already been suggested in
various footnotes. They all, in one way or another, revolve
around the question of the adequacy of the Kantian understanding
of both subjectivity and objectivity, and the consequent possibility
of founding metaphysics and/or religion upon that understanding of
subject and object.

is clearly to provide a framework for the recovery of faith which would establish the possibility of a plurality of true faiths as one condition of that recovery. Such a framework is provided in the performance of foundational thinking which, by clarifying the fundamental conditions of truth which have emerged in the present age, clarifies the logic of the truth of faith in terms of which religious truth is to be understood and the possibility of plurality established. Yet it can be argued that the basic idea of absolute (or existential) truth clarified by this foundational thinking, far from establishing the intended possibility of a plurality of true religions, actually constitutes an effective negation of both plurality and religion. The logic of such truth, in other words, requires a transformation of traditional religious faiths by which they are in fact subsumed into the (normative and universal and exclusive) truth of Jaspers' philosophical faith.

Jaspers, of course, would vigorously reject this charge. Religion for him is and remains clearly distinct from philosophy. However much philosophical faith might be "religious" in the very broadest sense of that term, actual, positive religion "remains for philosophy always a polar other."[134] Thus philosophical faith can never become some "enlightened" natural religion ("within the limits of reason alone") designed as an alternative to the superstitions of positive religion. Moreover

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[134]R., p. 779.

the truth of faith, whether philosophical or religious, is always attained within the boundary of particular historical situatedness and expressed in forms peculiar to each historical situation. Such truth, then, is inescapably "historic and plural."[135]

Yet even where these claims are provisionally granted, the basic problem has not been met. Granted, in other words, that philosophical faith provides no alternative to the rich particularity of religious faith and that all faith is attained only in historic particularity (and thus diversity), such particular philosophical and religious faiths are still true only insofar as they are instances or expressions of that more fundamental or foundational idea of truth outlined in Jaspers' Grundgedanke.[136] And that foundational truth, it can be further argued, bears little resemblance to and is actually inimical to the particular character of religious truth. Thus Jaspers' call for the transformation of traditional religious faiths would indeed, his disclaimer and his intentions notwithstanding, constitute an effective negation of both plurality and religion.

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[135]VdW, p. 635.

[136]On this view, then, the Enlightenment's opposition of natural and positive religion at least recognized real differences (or plurality) which in fact disappear in Jaspers' seductively deceptive affirmation of plurality whereby the movement of transcending Existenz is the deep or true element in all particular, historic truth claims.

The central issue here concerns the significance of historic particularity (whether as particular expression of thought and belief, as concrete action and ritual, or as particular persons and events) in Jaspers' understanding of religious truth. (In different terms it is the issue of mediation and immediacy.) Without particularity there would be no plurality, and without certain types of relations to specific particularities there would be no religion.[137] Thus a logic which would affirm a possible plurality of true religions must provide an account of particularity which admits of a real or significant plurality which is also a religious plurality. Yet Jaspers' Grundgedanke seems vulnerable at just this point. His account of particularity seems open to serious question in (at least) two related ways.

In the first place, the endlessly dialectical character of his thought is intended quite explicitly to bring all particularity, all objective securities and solid footholds, into suspension. The continual movement is crucial since it alone finally brings one to the boundary, so to speak, to the point where the absence of securities opens the possibility of Existenz, and thus the possibility of an ascertainment of transcendence in

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[137]More fundamentally, of course, it is the status of the world as nature, object, and events - - the entire realm which Jaspers calls "existence" - - and the relation of the subject to such "otherness" which is at issue. Thus the pursuit of specific questions concerning Jaspers' affirmation of religious plurality finally leads, as noted above, to more general questions about the adequacy of the Kantian understanding of subjectivity and objectivity around which his foundational thinking is constructed.

faith. The concrete historical particularity within which
one is inescapably situated, for instance, is possibly
revelatory of transcendence precisely when it is recognized as
a boundary situation - - that is, precisely in the movement which
seeks to transcend its particularity. Yet this would mean
that transcendent truth is not at all attained in particular
historical existence. At best the particular situation becomes
an occasion or a necessary means - - a springboard whence
Existenz leaps to transcendence and to which it must always
return, but only to leap ever again. To be sure, transcending
for Jaspers does not, cannot mean actually moving beyond
particularity. No direct, intuitive or mystical encounter with
transcendence seems possible to Jaspers. Thus the springboard
image is perhaps deceptive. Transcending is a movement in
thought beyond thought which thus never really leaves the
particular form of thought. It is, more broadly, a movement
in the world which changes one's consciousness of the world,
rendering it transparent to its depth (or encompassing). Thus
there is never actually a moment when the particularity is
behind. Nor, then, can the expression of faith in the forms
of that particularity be regarded simply as an inescapable but
clearly secondary consequences of some previous and in itself
inexpressible experience of transcendence. Yet the particularity
of the situation, the actual historic character which differentiates
it from other situations, would still seem to be dissolved into
a general structure of existential anthropology. What is important,

indeed inescapable, is particularity as such, almost any particularity, and not this specific (and sacred) particularity. Thus particularity is still important only as a means in the movement of transcending, however much that movement remains "imprisoned in appearance."

Secondly, then, (and this is really the same point made somewhat differently) Jaspers' account of particularity would be inadequate because, however necessary or inescapable the given particularity, truth resides essentially in the movement of Existenz within that particularity.[138] The truth of faith is essentially a matter of inwardness or immediacy for which any mediations are simply necessary and finally indifferent occasions. Or, to put the matter somewhat differently, the sole "mediator" is Existenz. The inner movement of Existenz is the sole point of contact with transcendence. All other mediations are true only insofar as they occasion, serve as vehicles for, or express this single mediator, and they must be relativized or brought into suspension by the critical movement of thought lest they hinder the free emergence of Existenz as that single mediator. Thus while a plurality of mediators, of various particulars as necessary means in the movement of transcending, is certainly possible, it cannot be regarded as a significant plurality.

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[138]H. Barth (pp. 284-285) puts the same point somewhat differently in noting that for Jaspers only one historic particularity is crucial, namely the particular vision of autonomous humanity characteristic of 19th Century German idealism.

All faiths have to meet the test of this one faith.[139] Thus,
too, it is at very least seriously questionable whether such
inwardness, reducing as it does particular religious mediations
to the status of indifferent means, can constitute an adequate
account of religious truth. The _sola fide_ ("sola Existenz")
of Jaspers' radical protestantism would seem to void the signifi-
cance of _any_ religious mediations.[140]

There are, then, serious difficulties involved in Jaspers'
understanding of the logic of religious truth which make his claim
to have established the possibility of a plurality of true religions
questionable. Jaspers, of course, is not unaware of the type of
objections which have just been raised and there are aspects of
his thought which speak directly to them. Thus explicit considera-
tion must next be given to those aspects if an adequate picture
of Jaspers' approach to the question of religious pluralism is
to be obtained.

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[139]Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar's critique of Jaspers'
intolerance in The God Question and Modern Man (New York: The
Seabury Press, 1967), pp. 84-86.

[140]The question of mediation is evidently a complex
one involving differing positions within as well as among religions.
Inwardness, moreover, would certainly seem to be an essential char-
acteristic of religious truth by most accounts. Still, as Jaspers
himself stresses (R, pp. 778-779); it is the positive mediation of
event, text, and tradition, of community and cult, "as the actuality
of something specifically holy in places, objects, and acts" which
distinguishes religion and makes witness and reverence specifically
religious attitudes. Yet even this stress on religious positivity
is less significant than it might seem. As H. Barth notes (pp. 292-
293) Jaspers lumps all religious particularity indifferently
together under general headings of "rite" and "dogma" and the like.
The actual particularity or positivity of different religions is
rarely, if ever, considered.

IV

PARTICULARITY, PLURALITY, AND RELIGIOUS TRUTH

With the type of questioning indicated at the end of
the preceding chapter the central issue in Jaspers' discussion
of religious pluralism has been clearly joined. And while the
main lines of Jaspers' response to such questioning were laid
down in his foundational thinking, it is the elaboration of those
foundations with regard to different, specific topics which
provides the details of that response. Typically, of course,
there are a variety of such topics wherein Jaspers elaborates
the detail necessary for an adequate understanding of his
thought on the central issue of particularity and plurality.
For present purposes, however, it is above all the topic of
history, and more specifically Jaspers' understanding of the
historicity of truth, which will best serve to illustrate in
detail his argument concerning particularity.[1] In what follows,
then, aspects of Jaspers' discussion of history will be used
to fill out the needed detail of Jaspers' affirmation of the
possibility of a plurality of true religions. Reference will

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[1]Focus on the topic of historicity is appropriate
not only because of its evident importance in Jaspers' thinking
as well as in the preceding sections of this presentation of
that thinking, but also because of the centrality of history
to the question of religious pluralism and truth. Not only
is religious plurality a fact arising from human history, but
that contemporary consciousness of such plurality which provides
the problematic context for the present discussion of religious
truth is itself a manifestation of what might more generally
(albeit too loosely) be called "modern historical consciousness."

-141-

also be made to two related themes which figure heavily in Jaspers' thought and which bear directly on the question of particularity: his stress on <u>communication</u> and his idea of <u>cipher</u>.

Since Jaspers' various discussions of particular topics invariably follow or recapitulate, each in its own way, the basic, dialectical movement of his foundational thinking, the outline of this chapter will be structured accordingly. Thus Jaspers' response to the criticism that he loses particularity (and with it plurality and religion) will begin with (1) a brief restatement of his critical protest against all particular claims to the status of universal, trans-historical truth. Within that negation, however, he (2) affirms the possibility of necessarily historic and always particular (thus plural) attainments of absolute truth. (And the dialectical character of this affirmation is summarized in his understanding of all such historical events and beliefs as ciphers of transcendence). Finally, he urges (3) the applicability of this understanding of truth and particularity to the specific case of religious particularity and truth, thereby reaffirming the possibility of a plurality of true religions.

I.

In essence, Jaspers' response to the charge that his thinking loses particularity[2] is given in the principle funda-

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[2]The charge comes not only from religious thinkers, but in different ways from thinkers concerned with a variety

mental to his Grundgedanke that Existenz can be realized only
in the world. "It is in existence only that I come to be sure
of myself and thus of transcendence."[3] The distinction between
Existenz and existence, in other words, indicates not a separa-
tion but a dialectical relationship. "Possible Existenz thus
sets itself off from the world in order to find the right way
into the world . . . as the medium of its realization . . . ."[4]
Paradoxically, then, "the world can be transcended only in the
world"[5] - - only in thought and action concretely engaged in
always particular situations in the world.

    This means, of course, that for Jaspers there is no
truth to an image of transcending as a flight from the world,
as some direct intuitive grasp of transcendence. In this
regard his suspicion of and continual struggle against mysticism
have already been noted.[6] Yet it is equally true for Jaspers
that no final (a-historic) truth, whether in the form of

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of topics. Transcending Existenz, it is said, loses the world,
concrete history, the human community and the realities of
politics and religion. Cf., for instance, the articles by
Herbert Marcuse (pp. 131-132), Karl Löwith (pp. 149-152), and
Otto Friedrich Bollnow (pp. 236-237), as well as the already
noted articles by Jürgen Habermas (pp. 314-315) and Heinrich
Barth (pp. 290-291) in Saner, ed., Karl Jaspers in der Discussion.

    [3]Ph II, p. 106; cf. pp. 182-183, 295-297, 310.

    [4]Ph II, p. 5; cf. pp. 257, 306.

    [5]Dufrenne and Ricoeur, p. 66.

    [6]To be sure, Jaspers' attitude toward mysticism is
complex. He recognizes real differences veiled by the one term
(PFR, p. 280) and finds some testimony to mysticism indubitably

particular events claimed to be revelatory of the whole or of particular ideas and beliefs supposed to comprehend the whole, is attainable as such *in* the world. The impossibility of such "meta-physical" truth is, of course, basic to his foundational thinking and is given with the Kantian critique central to that thinking. More concretely, however, that impossibility is a fundamental aspect of the modern historical consciousness which for Jaspers is one of the basic conditions for truth clarified by the contemporary crisis.[7] The world in which Existenz comes "to be sure of itself and thus of transcendence" is the world of human history. And all attainment of truth in that world can only be historic, never total or final.

The term "modern historical consciousness" refers, of course, to a phenomenon as complex in origin as it is in substance. And while Jaspers has written a good deal about

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authentic (PFR, pp. 265 ss.; VdW, pp. 137, 702). Still, although mysticism as much as the religious faith with which it is so often connected is finally a polar other which Jaspers' thought does not comprehend, he struggles against mysticism because he "cannot bridge the chasm between man and God" (PFR, p. 264) and because mysticism (and religion) denies and finally loses the world (Ph II, pp. 277-279; cf. p. 183 and PFR, p. 25). For a discussion of Jaspers on mysticism, cf. Ehrlich, pp. 40-56.

The complexity of Jaspers' attitude toward mysticism is a good concrete illustration of his understanding of plurality and truth -- where, in light of what one believes to be true, one struggles against, yet finally accepts the possible but uncomprehended truth of the other. Yet it is also worth noting that Jaspers' struggle against mysticism is in large measure a response to the view, as in the line of questioning under consideration here, which finds that his own thinking in fact ends in a type of world-losing mysticism. For a recent example of this view cf. Fritz Buri, "Concerning the Relationship of Philosophical Faith and Christian Faith," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XL #4, (Dec., 1972), p. 455.

[7]Cf. above, p. 66.

the idea of history,[8] he typically has avoided any "neat" attempt
to tie down the rather slippery concept.[9] It is at least clear,
however, that modern awareness of history has contributed in a
variety of ways to the widely accepted sense that all particular
ideas, beliefs, and traditions (all religions, for instance) are
in some sense historically relative. What was thought to be
the eternal-in-time, those sacred points where the distance
between time and eternity had been considered bridged, has come
to be seen as itself temporal, changing, and relative to particu-
lar periods and places. Humanity lives not simply in time, but
in history, that realm of human striving whose record is dotted
with diversity. Each person, then, finds himself situated
concretely at a particular time and place, with a particular
heritage of language, culture, and beliefs, all of which are
caught up in an endless whirl of change. Knowledge brings
awareness of this situation, and awareness that it is just
one particular situation lost, so to speak, in the vastness
of history. Yet such knowledge can provide no way beyond
this situatedness and thus threatens to produce a dizzying vertigo

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[8]Cf., above all, The Origin and Goal of History;
Ph II, pp. 104-129, 184-193, 342-359; and R, pp. 760-777.
For interpretation, cf. especially the already cited article
by Heinrich Barth, as well as John Hennig, "Karl Jaspers'
Attitude Towards History," and Jeanne Hersch, "Jaspers'
Conception of Tradition," both in Schilpp, pp. 565-593 and
593-610.

[9]The simplest summary of his ideas is the brief
chapter on history in WW, pp. 96-109.

of relativity which leaves one naked and rootless.[10]

The danger of such historical consciousness, then, is that it can lead to a complete or totally inescapable relativism. Sometimes called "historicism," such total relativity clearly constitutes a nihilist denial of the very possibility of truth.[11] Yet Jaspers' own effort, as noted above,[12] is to steer a middle course between such historicism and an a-historical attainment of eternal verities. His thought is an attempt to take cognizance of the relativizing of traditional worlds, the tremendous growth of historical knowledge, and the consequent heightened awareness of the historically situated and changing character of human thought - - to take cognizance of what is inescapable for historical consciousness even while-overcoming the temptation to a complete historical relativism. Thus while wary of the constant threat of nihilism, he nonetheless clearly affirms the relativizing consequences of historical consciousness as a premise which must today condition the quest for truth.

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[10]That such historic situatedness constitutes the basic boundary situation has already been noted in the preceding chapter. Cf. above, pp. 110-111. The phrase "vertigo of relativity" is borrowed from Peter Berger, A Rumor of Angels (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), p. 40.

[11]Of course, the very affirmation of the historicist position is self-contradicting since it asserts as a-historically true that all truth claims are historical. Yet, although it is logically contradictory when expressed propositionally, historicism as a mood or attitude does express the climate of much contemporary thought which, aware of the historic situatedness of thought, finds no way beyond such situational relativity.

[12]Cf. pp. 43-48.

Such consequences do not, of course, result simply
from the vast accumulation of historical knowledge during the
past several centuries. For historical knowledge as such, no
matter how extensive, does not necessarily lead to historical
consciousness (as the term is being used here). But neither
can it overcome such consciousness. Thus it is not the fact
of massive knowledge of history, but the critique of (or under-
standing of) the nature and limits of historical knowledge
which is the logically necessary foundation for the modern
consciousness of historic relativity. What can be known via
historical investigation is endless factual objectivity about
this or that - - evidence of human action and of the multiple and
complex interrelations of causes and effects. But that which
transcends such endless relativity, either as the final whole
of history or as the trans-historical which may speak at or
through particular moments of history, cannot be thus known.
In terms of religion, for instance, historical study can attain
considerable knowledge (or truth) <u>about</u> a given religion or
religious reality, but cannot know or even approach the truth
<u>of</u> the religion itself (the religious truth).

> Confessions of faith are themselves
> realities and belong to history. But,
> whatever it is to which they bear
> testimony is no object of historical
> investigation.[13]

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[13]R, p. 764. This, of course, is the point of Lessing's
remark that "an ugly broad ditch which I cannot get across, how-
ever often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap,"

For knowledge, then, or as knowable reality, history is "the
relativization of everything objective."[14]. It is "ultimately
nothing but . . . universal transience, change in causal rela-
tions of effect and aftereffect, an endless up and down in
random diversity without beginning or end."[15]

Yet if the massive accumulation of historical knowledge
is not the logically necessary foundation of modern historical
consciousness, it remains nonetheless true that this increase
in knowledge, coupled with the global horizon of awareness
established by modern technique, has made this consciousness
a dominant, crucial aspect of the contemporary crisis, no longer
just the concern of solitary forerunners like Kierkegaard and
Nietzsche. And the resulting situation has, in fact, led to
the type of actual communication, as in the serious and respect-
ful encounter between world religions, which if anything
heightens not just a general sense of relativity, but specific
awareness of the relativity and situatedness of one's own
particularity.[16]

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separates the "accidental truths of history" from the absolute
truth claimed by religion. Cf. Lessing's Theological Writings,
ed. Owen Chadwick (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1956), pp.
55, 53.

[14]Ph II, p. 347.

[15]Ph II, p. 348. It is perhaps worth observing again
that here, even more so than in his general discussion of know-
ledge in terms of scientific knowing, Jaspers does not argue but
takes for granted this critique of knowledge. His primary concern
is with the possibility of truth in the situation resulting from
the critique.

[16]For Jaspers historicity and communication are

Vastly increased historical knowledge, then, as one
key aspect of the pervasive consciousness of historic relativity,
involves (at least) two serious risks.[17] On the one hand it may
in fact lead to greater and greater distance from the past of
one's own (or any other) tradition. It may constitute a "vast
rubble to which events keep adding immensely, and which is no
longer meaningful to know or collect."[18] At best a "collection
of curios,"[19] it might block access to serious reappropriation
of the past even as it filled the present with protean, but
empty possibilities.[20] It might, in other words, lead to
rootless indifference and absurd freedom.

Or it might, on the other hand, lead to a reaction
whereby "what is historically known will be one-sidedly objecti-
fied and solidified into something valid and authoritative,"

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inseparable. Communication at the level of Existenz is not, for
him, a royal (if rough) road to harmony, but a loving struggle
with real otherness which throws one back upon oneself in awareness
of one's historicity. For Jaspers it is, as will be seen below,
the context or way for the attainment of absolute truth, but only
because it first is the context which concretely awakens one to
the boundary of one's own situatedness. For Jaspers' understanding
of communication, cf. above all Ph II, pp. 47-103, as well as RE,
pp. 77-106.

[17]Ph II, p. 346.

[18]Ph II, p. 346.

[19]Ph III, p. 11.

[20]It is a tragic irony of our times that the more we claim
to know about the past, the less we seem capable of serious links
with it. Traditional man, who perhaps knew relatively little in
terms of our ideal of historical accuracy, lived in deep continuity
with the past, while the children of the present increasingly find
the "dead" past unearthed for them by the scholar's toil "irrelevant"
to their living concerns.

into "a universal, generally human truth which I believe I know as a historically objective <u>authority</u>."[21] And while the temptation to such flight from history may well be perennial, it seems especially prevalent in the face of contemporary consciousness of change, diversity, and relativity. Such forgetfulness of history can, of course, take many different forms. The defensive rigidity of religious orthodoxy and the parallel emergence of fanatical surrogate religions, both in reaction to the uncertainties of the contemporary crisis, have already been noted.[22] Threatened by relativity, the proponents of tradition absolutized the contents of one tradition (and of one particular configuration of that tradition) into a universal validity, thus demanding a mechanical repetition of the past.[23] More generally, one quite legitimately takes the content of a particular historical moment, wherein truth may indeed have spoken and may continue to speak, but then illegitimately locks the vast diversity of human history into that one particular by identifying it as a literal embodiment of transcendence.[24] Or,

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[21]Ph II, pp. 347, 346.

[22]Cf. above, pp. 70-72.

[23]Ph III, p. 26. Cf. VdW, pp. 909-913.

[24]R, pp. 761-765. This of course is the charge which Jaspers makes against religion generally, but above all against the Christian idea of revelation. Cf. PFR, pp. 100-102. Jaspers, as will be seen below, continually uses the notion of "embodiment" to contrast with the idea of "cipher" in terms of which he understands the contents of particular, historic realizations of transcendence.

moving in the opposite direction, one develops a philosophy of
history which neatly harmonizes all relativity into the known unity
of a vision of the whole. Thus all particular situations, including
one's own, become instances of a general law or moments in the
general process of history.[25]

Whatever its specific form, however, the essence of such
response to historical consciousness is an illegitimate absoluti-
zation of what can in fact be known only as a relative, historic
particularity. It is the response of procrustean absolutism in
the face of protean relativism. And while Jaspers' entire philo-
sophical effort can, as noted, justly be taken as a struggle
against the nihilist consequences of the latter, his most vehement
polemics are reserved for the former. Whether it is the dogmatic
exclusivity of orthodox Marxism, orthodox psychoanalysis,[26] or
orthodox Christianity, all such illegitimate universalizations
of particular beliefs are excoriated as forms of that totalitarian
tendency which Jaspers calls "catholicism" (Katholizität) − −
the forced unification of all diversity under the visible authority
of one truth proclaimed as both absolute and universal.[27] In its

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[25]Ph II, pp. 116, 348-349, and OGH, especially pp.
267-269. Sketches of the unity of history, such as Jaspers' own
are quite legitimate as elements in the process of existential
elucidation, but become false and terrible when taken as know-
able masterplans into which the diversity of history is to
be forced. Jaspers' primary target here is Marxist orthodoxy.
Cf. RAR, pp. 8-20.

[26]RAR, pp. 20-27.

[27]VdW, pp. 847-857.

effort to save (its) particularity from the abyss of relativism,
it becomes forgetful of history and thus, ironically, loses the
real historic particularity it purports to defend.

Jaspers, then, would turn the tables on his critics
(since it is above all Marxists and Christians of various shades
who attack him for the loss of concrete historic particularity). As
understood by orthodoxy, the embodiments of particular traditions
become fixed and rigid. They "congeal into general validities"
which conceal rather than reveal the original inspiration and
authority which spoke in them.[28] By absolutizing a particular
vision of the whole, rigid philosophies of history reduce all
actual particulars to mere instances of a general process.
They lock the concrete and complex particularity of history
into the procrustean pattern of certain particular events or
some ideological straightjacket. Even more fundamentally,
however, by the claim to know the truth and the consequent
demand for assent and obedience, all such catholicism destroys
that existential freedom and unconditionality without which,
for Jaspers, not only particularity but truth as such would be
unattainable.[29] By denying the concrete and relative particularity

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[28]Ph III, p. 26.

[29]VdW, p. 849. As regards present reappropriation
of traditions, for instance, Jaspers stresses that "only
emancipation from this required obedience will bring the
individual so to himself" that "existential commitment with-
out the fixed form of tradition" will be possible. Ph III,
p. 26.

of one's situation, one ends "unexistentially tied" or "affixed"
to "a universal truth existing in timeless unreality."[30] The
result is "an unreal fantasy that would exclude any real Existenz . . .
a fundamental, albeit unwitting, voidance of historicity."[31]

Thus Jaspers' defense of particularity begins with a
reiteration of his basic critique of knowledge, this time in
the form of a negation of the possibility that any historic
particularity might claim the status of trans-historic truth.[32]
The first line of that defense, in other words, is a critique
of his critics and of the traditional defense of historic
particularity. In view of the reality of history it is no
longer possible to be both naive and truthful, no longer
possible to defend particularity by proclaiming the truth of
a given particularity. Rather it is the very relativity of all
knowable history, the objective relativity of history, which
Jaspers understands not as the demise of the possibility of
truth (although the danger of collapse into nihilism is always
present), but as the condition of that possibility.[33] Modern

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[30]Ph II, p. 108.

[31]Ph II, p. 116.

[32]Evidently the present account of Jaspers' response
is an interpretative reconstruction drawn from various parts of
his writings. Still it is true to say that his response begins
with such negation because this is the invariable pattern of
his dialectic, a pattern dictated by the Kantian framework of
his thought.

[33]Because the threat of nihilism is "the acid in which
the gold of truth must be proved," its ever present danger pro-
vides "a transition to a profounder assimilation of historic
tradition." PSP, p. 173.

historical consciousness, clarified and made inescapable by
the crisis of the present, has become the context within which
the idea of truth must be reunderstood and the truth itself
must be sought.

2.

Jaspers' argument to this point, however, has done
little to meet the real force of the objections to which he is
responding. The context of discussion, the shift in focus to
the realm of history, is admittedly more concrete, but the
problem of Jaspers' ability to provide an adequate account of
particularity remains, and is perhaps even exacerbated by his
stress on the relativity of all historic particulars. The
concrete movement of history has replaced the inner movement
of thought as the focus of Jaspers' dialectic (although the
two are hardly separable), but continual movement, the loss
of all fixed points and objective or historic securities, is
still central as the fundamental condition which opens the
possibility of a free transcending. Thus historic particulari-
ties, such as particular religious traditions, would still seem
at best concrete occasions for such transcending. Given their
relativity it is hard to see how they would be anything else.[34]

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[34]Thus Paul Ricoeur's repeated accusation that the
weight of Jaspers' thinking carries him, despite his protesta-
tions to the contrary, into "the non-commitment of aestheticism" - -
"like a Don Juan courting all the gods," but finally standing
aloof observing the panorama of history's (ever-relative)
abundance. Schilpp, pp. 638-639; cf. Dufrenne and Ricoeur,
p. 391.

Yet for Jaspers, however abstract the description of transcending may inevitably be in foundational thinking, it is precisely the reality of such transcending in concrete history which refutes these objections. Thus the second, positive move in his response, and the real core of his account of the place of particularity in absolute (religious) truth, is his attempt to establish a <u>via media</u> between relativism and catholicism by a dialectical holding together of the absoluteness of faith with the objective relativity of history. It is a path to the attainment of truth not by somehow getting around the limitations of history, but by moving <u>through</u> history, by penetrating to the depth of the particular.[35] Jaspers elucidates the possibility of such transcending-in-penetration by means of his idea of historicity or existential historicity (Geschichtlichkeit) and the correlative notion of adoption or appropriation (<u>Aneignung</u>).

For Jaspers talk of the "historicity" of truth refers not to the relativity of history, but to the absoluteness of truth attainable within that relativity. "Absolute truth is historic, in other words, because we as possible Existenz are historic."[36] But that is to say that <u>for Existenz</u> historic

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[35] There is, Jaspers notes, "no way round history, but only a way through history," OGH, p. 275. The correlation of limitation and depth, or the idea of "profundity only in narrowness," is, as Jean Wahl notes, one of the basic experiences governing all of Jaspers' thought. <u>La Pensée de l'Existence</u>, p. 64.

[36] PW, p. 150.

truth can be absolute. Here Jaspers makes a distinction which

has since achieved common currency in much contemporary

(particularly theological) thought - - the distinction between a

"sense of history" (<u>historische Bewusstsein</u>) as knowledge of

history and the historical truth of that knowledge, and a "sense

of historicity" (<u>geschichtliches Bewusstsein</u>) as existential

consciousness of one's historically situated particularity and

the possible (historic or absolute) truth of that particularity.[37]

That sense of historicity which is a condition and characteristic

of absolute truth is not, as stressed above, a result of histori-

cal knowledge, however much the tremendous increase in such

knowledge may have contributed to the clarification of such

existential historicity. Yet a sense of history as both aware-

ness of the plurality, relativity, and endless movement of

history and a critical understanding of the limits of historical

knowledge does set the stage for existential historicity and

the attainment of historic truth. On the basis of such a sense

of history an individual may awaken to awareness of his own

historic situatedness - - "as phenomenally bound in time to a

sequence of singular situations."[38] He may, in other words,

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[37]Ph II, pp. 104-105. For Jaspers, unlike others who
have later used it, the distinction never solidifies into two
realms - - "<u>Historie</u>" and "<u>Geschichte</u>." There is only one
reality, approached now as an object of knowledge and again
as a possibility of serious, existential appropriation. Even
as regards terminology Jaspers is, as noted, almost deliberately
imprecise, generally using the term "<u>Geschichte</u>" for all of the
various senses of history.

[38]Ph II, p. 105.

experience the fundamental boundary of situatedness in historic particularity.

Jaspers' foundational thinking has, of course, already shown how experience of this boundary can be the springboard to transcending in Existenz. Yet it can be this springboard only insofar as the concrete situation in its unique particularity becomes in adoption the medium of transcending. There is, then, a shift in the image which captures (or controls) Jaspers' thinking - - from the spring or leap which leaves one in suspension on the boundary to penetration wherein one identifies with one's historic particularity, from solitary inner movement to concrete, historic engagement. Both sets of images are crucial and it is the dialectical holding-together of these images which is constitutive of Jaspers' idea of historicity. For historicity means that within the very concreteness and particularity of this (my) situation, and only in this concrete particularity, is Existenz as decisive ascending awareness of transcendence possible.

> Only in this appearance, not outside it
> in an imaginary detached self-being and
> an abstract transcendence, lies the
> present substance of what I am. This
> unity of mine with my phenomenal exist-
> ence is my historicity.[39]

In contrast to an "imaginary detached self-being," then, Jaspers in effect is saying, "Look at how real people actually come to decisive self-realization and faith - - not by some vague transcending, but by concrete decision made in personal

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[39]Ph II, p. 106.

quest and struggle, in real and ever particular situations and beliefs."

Jaspers tends not to identify his philosophy with one or several concrete historical persons, preferring rather to suggest an array of "great philosophers" and historic personages who have influenced his thinking and whose lives have exemplified various aspects of his thought. Still there is one person who may justly be said to serve here as an exemplary figure for Jaspers' idea of historicity - - the Renaissance thinker Giordano Bruno whose life Jaspers contrasts with that of his more famous contemporary Galileo.[40] Both faced the same inquisitorial/demand that they recant aspects of their writings. Galileo recanted and lived; Bruno refused and "died a martyr's death."[41] Jaspers exonerates Galileo since the truth in question was a matter of scientific knowledge which did not need the support of personal witness and which could (and would soon) be verified by countless others.

> A truth which I can prove stands without
> me; it is universally valid, unhistorical,
> timeless, but not absolute.[42]

Bruno's truth, however, was not a matter of knowledge, but of

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[40] Ph I, p. 264; VdW, pp. 651-652; PSP, pp. 4-5.

[41] PSP, p. 4. Jaspers elsewhere (PFR, p. 46) calls Bruno "the great martyr of modern philosophy" for his stand in personal faith against the violently exclusive claims of religious "catholicism."

[42] PSP, p. 4.

faith. It was truth attained in the arduous struggle of his

personal history which would be realized only in the act of

witness to that struggle and attainment.

> A truth by which I live stands only <u>if
> I become identical</u> with it; it is his-
> torical in form; as an objective state-
> ment it is not universally valid, but
> it is absolute.[43]

Thus Bruno is exemplary not because of the contents of his

visionary thinking, however interesting they may be,[44] but

because his life and above all his death show how the trans-

cending faith of Existenz is attained only in concrete engage-

ment, indeed only by actual identification with such particular

contents.[45]

The intent of Jaspers' idea of historicity, then,

is clear enough. Transcending faith not only does not preclude

but actually demands engagement in and with concrete historic

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[43]PSP, p. 4. (Emphasis added.)

[44]Jaspers does speak of Bruno as a "great metaphy-
sician" whose thinking has influenced his own. Ph I, p. 2.
Yet he admits that "the saints of philosophy" are not neces-
sarily the greatest philosophers. PSP, p. 5.

[45]In this context one may readily think of two other
figures from the same period who have been seen as exemplars
of such existential commitment in much recent literature - -
Thomas More and Martin Luther. Indeed Luther's "Here I stand!"
might well serve as a motto for Jaspers' idea of historicity.
Jaspers' failure to mention either probably stems in part
from his primary concern with philosophical, and not religious
faith, and in part from the fact that Luther seems to him the
embodiment of that intolerant religious exclusivism against
which his idea of existential historicity is aimed. Cf. PFR,
p. 46.

particularity as a fundamental condition of its possibility. Thus for Jaspers particularity is not something secondary, a mere occasion for existential historicity understood as the transcending movement of faith from some (thus any) particular point in time. Yet at this point it is still not clear why Jaspers affirms this and how he understands the relationship of absolute faith and historic relativity. Lest his talk of historicity and historic engagement seem an arbitrary assertion of will in the face of relativity (and thus no truth at all), or lest it seem an intellectual sleight of hand, a _tour de force_ wherein the relative becomes suddenly, as if by magic, the bearer of absolute truth, it will be well to look a bit more closely at the dialectical pattern of Jaspers' understanding of historicity.[46]

As already noted, knowledge of history or a sense of history can set the stage for the historic self-realization of Existenz. But the awakening of Existenz is itself a free, personal act, not a conclusion from certain knowledge. Awareness of history's diversity (of religious diversity, for instance), of universal relativity and transience, may just as well lead to a variety of inauthentic attitudes.[47] Thus it is

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[46]Once again, of course, what follows is a brief reconstruction of a typical pattern of Jaspers' thinking on the idea of historicity and not an attempt to follow the complex and rich detail of that thinking.

[47]Ph II, pp. 346-351, 114-118, 124-129. In addition to the already discussed absolutization of a particular present, Jaspers mentions romantic flight to the past, aesthetic contemplation

above all, Jaspers notes, concrete engagement in the world
which opens the possibility of Existenz.

> Since I cannot become historic except by
> entering into existence, I cannot stay
> aloof from the world without losing my
> being as the realization of possible
> Existenz. In existence, as in particu-
> lar concerns of existence, I need first
> to be involved at all. . . . My involve-
> ment puts me into situations . . . and
> not until then can I experience what I
> want and act so as to become the historic
> phenomenon of my potential.[48]

Concrete involvement, in other words, opens the possibility

of awareness of my personal reality as a reality in time,

as a never-completed, historic struggle for realization in

a situation which is itself historic. Such historic

consciousness would grasp this situation from within, so

to speak, not simply as a matter of objective interest, but

as a matter of passionate personal concern. "In historic

consciousness I know myself to be so identical with the

particulars of my existence" that I understand them "as

belonging to me in the more profound idea of my _fate_."[49]

I experience the boundary of historic situatedness,

in other words, not as an experience of situatedness-in-

general, but as a uniquely personal awakening to _this_ historic

particularity as _my_ situation, as the possible medium of my

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of historic diversity, or simple indifference - - all
unexistential attitudes because in each the possibility
of Existenz is lost.

[48]Ph II, p. 118.

[49]Ph II, pp. 191-192.

realization. Such awakening is problematic, indeed threatening.
It involves the loss of that secure harmony whereby one's
situation (one's tradition, for instance, or one's religion)
was naively identified as the whole.[50] It involves awareness
of this situation as limited and particular - - a mere speck on
the vast panorama of history. Yet it is simultaneously aware-
ness of this concrete reality as my historic possibility. It
involves, then, both a distancing from the situation (a prob-
lematic awakening to oneself, to the mystery of one's freedom
and destiny) and a tightening of the situation (by awareness
of it as the reality of one's fate). In this experience of
the boundary, when faced with the fundamental question about
the ultimate significance or absurdity of one's life, one may
receive assurance of transcendence in the unconditional action
or faith of Existenz. Yet such transcending awareness of
faith is here inseparable from "immersion in my historic
definition" as the sole reality of my life.

> In this immersion I do not take up my
> fate as a merely external one, I take
> it up as mine: amor fati . . . . /Thus/
> the sense of historicity as a sense of
> fate means to take concrete existence
> seriously.[51]

Jaspers further clarifies this inseparability of
transcending and concrete engagement in his discussion of

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[50]Ph II, pp. 93-95.

[51]Ph II, p. 192.

communication. The idea of communication, in fact, is central to the theme of historicity.[52] Any historical action, of course, as the interaction of human beings, necessarily implies communication in some sense. Yet for Jaspers' thought communication is understood not simply as one characteristic of all historical activity, but as the primary and normative instance of that specific action, wherein the awakening of Existenz in transcending faith remains always concrete and particular.

Communication, of course, is a complex phenomenon and not all communication involves the awakening and presence of Existenz. In fact such communication is rather rare and must be distinguished from ordinary communication as the pursuit of interests, the exchange of information, or the affirmation of ideas. In Jaspers' terminology, communication within the encompassing of Existenz must be distinguished from communication within the other modes of the encompassing (empirical existence, consciousness-at-large, and spirit), even though existential communication can only occur within the medium of those objective modes.[53] Binding together the diverse modes of communication as their common and fundamental motive is reason as the will to truth, and thus the will to unity and the will to communication.

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[52]The first part of that "Existential Elucidation" to which the entire second (and central) volume of Philosophy is devoted is called "I Myself in Communication and Historicity." Major primary sources for Jaspers' discussion of communication are the lengthy chapter in Philosophy (II, pp. 47-103) and RE, pp. 77-106.

[53]Ph II, pp. 47-51, 61-63; RE, pp. 80-85, 94-95.

And it is this will to truth and unity which remains unsatisfied

with the various immanent modes of human communication and thus

pushes to their limits so that, at a given moment, in the give

and take of ordinary communication, the possibility of a different

kind of communication might arise.[54] In a discussion of religion,

for instance (to move directly to the topic at issue here),

whether in the on-going quest for reappropriation within a

particular tradition or in the dialogue of different traditions,

the discussion may approach certain limits where questions which

are no longer matters of accurate knowledge or the ascertainment

of ideas suddenly emerge with challenging clarity. The challenge

may, of course, be avoided in the endless flow of information and

ideas. Or it may be taken up as Existenz calls to Existenz. Then

the reality of communication has changed, shifted, even though

nothing has changed externally. Then the flow of information and

the give and take of ideas become the medium of what Jaspers calls

the "loving struggle" of Existenz with Existenz, of faith with

faith.

Such existential communication can arise, then, only at

the limits of other modes of communication when the quest for

truth presses beyond those limits. It will not arise in the day

to day "taken-for-grantedness" of one's faith, nor in the secure

harmony of tradition, and not at all in the closed confines of

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[54]Ph II, pp. 51-54; RE, pp. 85-91.

exclusive orthodoxy.[55] As Jaspers says, "not until I cease to be so-sheltered do I feel really impelled to communicate."[56] At the limit of such security -- for instance in the present crisis where the harmony of tradition has been disrupted by doubt, by the awareness of relativity and the disturbing presence of other traditions -- the possibility of such serious communicative quest for the truth arises. As always for Jaspers, experience of the boundary awakens Existenz. Yet (once again) the boundary is experienced not by some fantastic figure in brooding isolation, but concretely in the very real situation of human community and communication.

The encounter of such communication may, of course, take many forms and its contents will vary with the participants and the occasion or question which brings them together. (The dialogue of religions, however central to the present discussion, is just one example of a situation which might give rise to the loving struggle of communication.) Yet for Jaspers, such communication is not just one of many situations which might lead to the awakening of Existenz in boundary awareness and transcending faith. Rather, "it is only in communication that I come to myself."[57]

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[55]Ph II, pp. 93-95, 81-82. One of Jaspers' continual charges against religious faith is its refusal of communication in the name of a revealed truth to be followed in strict obedience rather than in the openness of communication. Cf. Ph II, pp. 57-58; PSP, p. 77, and PFR, passim.

[56]Ph II, p. 93.

[57]Ph II, p. 53. (Emphasis added.)

> The thesis of my philosophizing is: The
> individual cannot become human by himself.
> Self-being is only real in communication
> with another self-being. Alone, I sink
> into gloomy isolation - - only in community
> with others can I be revealed in the act of
> mutual discovery.[58]

Communication is not just one way to truth, it is for Jaspers

the way - - the most fundamental condition, characteristic, and

criterion of absolute truth.[59] For God, so to speak, or _sub_

specie aeternitatis, truth may be final and one, but for men in

time truth is manifold and developing - - "indeed a truth

developing in communication."[60]

Yet communication is the way to truth not in the sense

that truth is the result attained _by means of_ some special,

esoteric ("existential") form of communication. Since the

communication of Existenz with Existenz, in the medium of the

ordinary communication of information and ideas, moves beyond

the limits of those modes of communication, it does not share

their results. It is rather a never completed process, whose

only end is the possibility of fulfilled silence whence it will

be taken up ever again.[61] Said differently, it ends only in

failure to achieve results. Yet precisely this failure, this

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[58]OMP, p. 147.

[59]RE, pp. 104-106. More generally, communicability
is a keynote of each of the meanings of truth in the different
modes of the encompassing - - "what is common to all truth in
all modes of the encompassing: that to be generally true, truth
must be communicable." RE, p. 77.

[60]RE, p. 104.

[61]Ph II, pp. 63-64.

continual unfulfillment leads unpredictably to moments of
transcending awareness, to awareness of transcendence as the
ungraspable goal sought in communication, the unifying ground
which unites the still divided participants and motivates the
continuation of their struggle.

> The unfulfillment of communication and the
> difficulty of bearing its shipwreck become
> the revelation of a depth which nothing
> other than transcendence can fill.[62]

Thus absolute truth is attained, quite literally, only in
(in the process of) communication and not by means of it.
The struggle of communication, the movement to and fro of
challenge and response, becomes itself the free and unconditional
act (Existenz) of transcending faith.

In that endless give and take, however, the awareness
of faith is never "hit upon at one stroke" (not attained as "an
objective result that is held fast").[63] There is rather only
"a moment's certainty" grasped, as it were, in bits and pieces,
as hints and guesses which appear suddenly in the various turns
of the conversation. Such awareness, moreover, "once it is not
nothing to me, will appear to me as particular."[64] It will take
form in the information and ideas, the particular beliefs and
traditional views which are the content or substance of the
dialogue and which become in the movement of communication

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[62]RE, p. 104.

[63]Ph II, p. 63.

[64]Ph II, p. 106.

momentarily transparent to or revelatory of transcendence.

> As existence tied to his tradition, the
> individual can only come to himself by
> adopting the expressive worlds he has
> inherited /even if/ he adopts them to
> — the end of a new original realization.[65]

Thus the attainment of the absolute truth of faith in communi-

cation is at once awareness of transcendence as that which

encompasses oneself and the other, and a heightening of the

particular form of that awareness as the reality of one's faith.

In communication, in other words, one is thrown back upon one-

self - - in heightened awareness of the limit and particularity

of one's situation (of one's tradition, for instance) vis à vis

the other, yet simultaneously in awareness of this particularity

as the reality of one's fate, and finally in adoption of this

particularity as the realization of transcending faith. "Here

I stand," so to speak, not forgetful of historic relativity and

the presence of the other, not in arrogantly exclusive identifi-

cation of my truth with transcendence, but in the realization

that in time I can do nothing else. It is "here" only, albeit

only in the movement of communication and in ever momentary

(historic) attainment, that truth can be absolute (yet not

exclusive).

Clearly, then, Jaspers' defense of particularity is

not reducible to some (finally empty) choice of one particularity

from among the range of possibilities thrown up by human history - -

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[65]Ph II, p. 69.

as if one could calmly contemplate such possibilities from the outside, but then finally has to choose "because, after all, you can't stand every place at once." Truth would certainly be meaningless on such terms.[66] Nor is it equatable with those more sophisticated views in terms of which plurality is affirmed as part of a vision of the various cultures and religions, "each relating directly to God," each an inevitably historic and relative realization of transcendent faith.[67] There is no way in which this vision of the whole could be known as true. It is, moreover, despite its seductively harmonious character, finally destructive of that particular engagement whereby truth might actually be attained. Yet Jaspers' position is just as clearly not, at the other extreme, an absurd or historicist fatalism which finds the individual condemned to the prison of this particular situation. On the contrary, freedom, decision, choice are the crux of the matter for Jaspers:

> Truth is either cogent and thus not chosen,
> or it is made unconditional by choice.[68]

> Only as I am and do something unconditional
> in existence will transcendence also mani-
> fest itself to me . . . .[69]

But it is not a choice from among diverse possibilities. This

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[66]Ph II, p. 362.

[67]Jaspers singles out von Ranke's philosophy of history as an example of this widespread position. Ph II, p. 113.

[68]Ph II, p. 362.

[69]Ph II, p. 108.

particularity for me "is not a possible standpoint that might
be classified alongside other standpoints" for "as Existenz I
cannot stand at my own back - - something I can do quite well
as consciousness at large."[70] When push comes to shove, so to
speak, in concrete, communicative struggle the diversity of
possibilities which can be known and (endlessly) reflected
upon evaporates as I am challenged to declare myself. The
choice, then, is a choice of myself, of the concrete reality
of myself as Existenz in existence - - "here I stand" for,
in serious thought and communicative struggle, I cannot do
otherwise.

> The choice I start from, as the source of
> existential truth, is the choice in which
> Existenz chooses itself. Instead of choos-
> ing a truth from the many types I am offered,
> I come to it by choosing the freedom of
> Existenz to elucidate itself in the world
> view that is true for it alone.[71]

It is not a passive resignation to fate, but an active love
of my fate - - "the truth of the indissoluble union of particu-
larity and Existenz which we elucidate in the historic conscious-
ness of amor fati."[72]

Active love of one's fate, then, is "the historic
consciousness of adopting the particular as definition turned
into the historic depth of Existenz itself."[73] It is the
unconditional act whereby I take responsibility for my (real,

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[70]Ph. II, p. 117.

[71]Ph II, p. 363.

[72]Ph II, p. 192.

[73]Ph II, p. 192. (Emphasis added.)

concrete, existing) self - - the free appropriation of this historic particularity which "becomes a function of possible Existens" because "its contents and images point to me . , appeal to me, challenge me . . . ."[74] It is the deliberate decision to take myself in my concrete historic reality seriously, in fact to take this situatedness with unconditional seriousness.[75] It is the leap or shift whereby I am no longer simply an observer of my and other situatedness, nor simply "an individual finitely concerned with particular situations," but "infinitely concerned Existenz."[76]

Spoken of in terms of tradition, such adoption is not the naive "taken-for-grantedness" of those who live in the undisturbed unity of tradition, but that free reappropriation of tradition within the present crisis to which, as already noted, Jaspers' entire life's work was dedicated.[77] It is not a rigid, orthodox repetition of the past, nor "the desperate desolation of the 'well this is the way I am,' . . . /but/ a deeper form of freedom /as/ the choice of him who . . . takes himself over in his heritage, in this body, in this tradition."[78] It is, in other words, the rooting or replanting of freedom in

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[74]Ph II, pp. 105, 108.

[75]Ph II, p. 108.

[76]Ph II, p. 181.

[77]For an excellent account of Jaspers' thinking about tradition, cf. the already cited article by Jeanne Hersch in Schilpp, pp. 593-610, and Jaspers' "Reply," pp. 760-777.

[78]K, p. 776.

the soil of history.[79] It permits or, rather, demands continuity
and fidelity, for "the historicity of Existenz is its fidelity."[80]
It both leads to and depends upon the "taken-for-grantedness" of
everyday life and the community of life lived together under
common authority.[81] And it is or can be such concrete and
ordinary involvement in the ongoing life of a particular
tradition and community (what Jean Wahl calls, paradoxically,
a "relative catholicity"[82]) only because it is finally, uncondi-
tionally, taken to be true. In Jaspers' own words, "an Existenz
adheres to its own traditional revelation of transcendence . . .
in the particular form it has encountered and in the particular
language . . . not on the ground that the revelation is one
form of truth among others, that it is 'also true,' but because
to Existenz this truth is truth pure and simple, the truth whereby
its self-being will stand or fall."[83]

Yet, however much historic adoption demands continuity
and fidelity, its truth is not the enduring possession of a

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[79]The image is Harsch's; p. 595. Cf. Ph II; p. 116.

[80]Ph II, p. 118; cf. pp. 111-114 (on continuity) and
118-120 (on fidelity).

[81]Jaspers' lengthy discussions of authority constitute
a major theme in his thought. Cf. VdW, pp. 766-831; PE, pp. 47-
53, and the article "Liberty and Authority" in PW, pp. 33-56.

[82]La Pensée de l'Existence, pp. 104-105.

[83]Ph III, p. 23. Jaspers immediately adds, of course,
that "this very unconditionality would make it shun any exclu-
siveness and any claim to universality." It is absolute pre-
cisely as historic.

known certitude.[84] It is, to reiterate the controlling idea

of Jaspers' foundational thinking, not at all a matter of

cognition or of objectivity. Objectively speaking (in terms

of what can be known), one remains with historical relativities - -

the knowledge, for instance, that these beliefs have been held

by this particular tradition in these ways at these times and

places. To be sure, the shift occasioned by this limitation

of knowledge opens the possibility of truth in historic

adoption. But in that unconditional (existential) act truth

is attained historically - - in a moment, as fleeting awareness

of transcendence in the struggle of communicative adoption.[85]

It is, in Jaspers' frequently repeated metaphor, "truth in

breakthrough" (Wahrheit im Durchbruch), in momentary realiza-

tion which "cuts across time" (quer zum Zeit) as the "present

eternity of Existenz."[86]

Historicity, then, is simultaneously (or dialectically)

commitment to historic (enduring) particularity and historic

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[84]Ph II, p. 109; It "is no procurement of an extant,
enunciable possession."

[85]Here and in what follows the term "moment" should
not be misunderstood. Jaspers contrasts the transcending
awareness in "the exalted moment," the moment of uncondi-
tional act wherein Existenz is aware of transcendence, with
the timeless, unhistoric validity of knowledge. But this
moment is part ("both culmination and articulation") of the
"historic succession of interrelated moments" - - the process,
for instance, of communication, or the gradual growth of
freedom and responsibility over time. Cf. Ph II, pp. 110-113.

[86]Cf. Ph II, p. 105 and the entire section of VdW
entitled "Wahrheit im Durchbruch," pp. 710 ss., especially
710-745.

(momentary) awareness of transcendence in (i.e., by means of
and in the form of) that commitment. It is the unity in act,
in a moment (and thus ever again to be re-enacted), of that
which for thought remains inevitably dual.[87] To suggest this
finally ineffable unity, Jaspers relies upon a continual flow
of paradoxical formulations. Historic truth is the "appearance
of transcendence," "the temporal manifestation of transcendence,"
or perhaps most aptly "the vanishing presence of transcendence."[88]
"The truth of historicity is the unity of temporality with the
overcoming of time: it is the appearance of eternity."[89] Said
again, it is the unity of "eternal being" and "evanescent
phenomenon" - - "not in the sense of a timeless validity that
happens to be grasped now but would be just as capable of being
grasped at some other time . . . but in the sense that, once
fulfilled, the temporal particularity is comprehended as the
appearance of eternal being. . ."[90] Yet because historic truth
is attained only in "the factual moment deepened to present
eternity," this attainment remains a "tension-rich, never
definitive realization."[91]

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[87]Ph II, p. 107.

[88]Cf. Ph III, pp. 18-19.

[89]VdW, p. 651. Eternity, for Jaspers, is not a
changeless realm, "somewhere else, aside from temporal appear-
ance" (Ph II, p. 113), but the fullness of realization in time,
"the overcoming of time within time" (VdW, p. 651).

[90]Ph II, p. 111.

[91]Ph II, pp. 111, 306.

With such emphasis upon the historic/momentary character
of existential truth, however, the critical questions about
Jaspers' defense of particularity seem to return in full force.
What of the actual, particular contents of such realization?
Is their significance not diminished, and finally even negated
by this emphasis (an emphasis which is, after all, not only
unavoidable but clearly necessary in terms of Jaspers' founda-
tional thinking)? To this challenge Jaspers (in what may
here be considered the final clarification of his understanding
of particularity) answers both "yes" and "no." The content or
particular form of faith is at once nothing and everything - -
"infinitely important to the individual . . . and yet at the
same time it is to him as nothing before transcendence."[92]
"A sense of historicity," in other words, "can simultaneously
lend absolute weight to existence . . . and keep it in suspension
and relative, as mere existence."[93]

> The truth which Existenz acquires here
> in coming to itself is purely phenomenal,
> but the phenomenon as such, objectively
> conceived and held fast, is not the truth;
> it was true only because there was trans-
> cendence in it at the same time.[94]

The particular contents of faith, in other words, the ideas
and beliefs, sacraments and rituals of my tradition, are what
Jaspers calls "ciphers." What is adopted in existential
historicity is adopted not as the objective (dogmatic or

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[92]Ph II, p. 107.

[93]Ph II, p. 107.

[94]Ph II, p. 109.

embodied) presence of transcendence, but as cipher. Or, more
accurately, the objective becomes cipher of transcendence
(becomes transparent to transcendence) in the unconditionality
of historic adoption. As cipher ("because there was trans-
cendence in it at the same time") it is "infinitely important
to the individual."

The idea of cipher constitutes, of course, a major
and, in some respects, a culminating theme in Jaspers' philo-
sophy.[95] Thus his discussion of ciphers is both detailed and
complex.[96] Yet in a real sense that discussion adds nothing
substantially new to Jaspers' thought - - to the idea, for
instance, of faith and absolute truth. It is simply another
of the different ways in which he approaches and thinks through
his fundamental position. For the present, then, a brief
reference to Jaspers' discussion of ciphers must suffice.

A first understanding of the idea of cipher can be
suggested by reference to the basic philosophical operation
discussed in the previous chapter.[97] Human consciousness

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[95] Tilliette (p. 63) even calls it "the masterpiece
of his metaphysical thinking."

[96] The major primary sources are Ph III, pp. 113-
208, VdW, pp. 1022 - 1054 (published separately in English
as Truth and Symbol) and PFK, pp. 92-127. In addition to
the particular chapters in the already-cited secondary sources
by Dufrenne and Ricoeur, Ehrlich, Samay, and Tilliette, there
have been numerous articles and studies devoted particularly
to the significance of Jaspers' idea of cipher for the under-
standing of religion. Recent and noteworthy is Aloys Klein,
Glaube und Mythos (München: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1973).

[97] Cf. above, pp. 123-124.

remains always within the subject-object dichotomy. Awareness
of transcendence, then, must occur within that dichotomy, in
forms of objectivity. Yet this objective form of transcending
awareness (or the concepts within which this awareness occurs)
is "an objectivity which transcends all knowledge [and] thus
not actually an object, but what we call cipher or symbol or
metaphor."[98] It is awareness of transcendence in the form of
objectivity attained precisely in the operation which moves in
objectivity beyond it. Said differently, a cipher is the
bearer of transcendence in the (finally not completable and
thus endless) movement which negates its objectivity and
keeps it "in suspension." Yet it is thus transparent to
transcendence not in a merely speculative exercise of "formal
transcending," but only if such thinking is one with the
personal seriousness of Existenz ("the second wing"). In
itself the cipher remains endlessly ambiguous. It is no
longer a reality in the world as an object of knowledge, nor
is it the reality of transcendence. "Ciphers are never the
reality of transcendence itself, only its possible language."[99]
Yet that language can be heard only by Existenz as it thinks

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[98]VdW, p. 1022. The passage illustrates Jaspers'
deliberate terminological imprecision. Generally, however,
he speaks of "cipher" rather than "symbol" (the use of meta-
phor in this context being quite rare) because symbol too
often suggests that there is something else which could be
known directly, outside the symbol. PFR, p. 95. Cf. Ph III,
pp. 123-131 for Jaspers' early effort to locate his idea of
cipher within a more general understanding of symbolism.

[99]PFR, p. 93.

"in the direction of transcendence," struggling to read the cipher language of its historic situation, and acts unconditionally, in historic adoption. In such moments, then, "the ciphers speak to us," "their glow will bear the message of transcendence," but "only on the premise that we keep them suspended while comprehending them in the depths to which we have access."[100]

For Jaspers, anything might thus become the "possible language of transcendence." Any thought, event, or object -- an experience of nature, an encounter with history or with a living person, a poem or work of art, peaceful repose or extreme distress. All might become in a moment, for individual Existenz, "charged with the grandeur of God."[101] In a schematic ordering of the various realms of ciphers (or "languages of transcendence"), Jaspers refers to such immediate or intuitive experiences where suddenly one becomes attuned to the presence of transcendence as "the first language" or "the direct language of transcendence."[102] Such experience is unpredictable and might occur anywhere throughout human history and throughout an individual human life.[103] A sunrise, for instance, while known in scientific

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[100]PFR, p. 93.

[101]Cf. PFR, p. 95. (The phrase from Gerard Manley Hopkins is not cited by Jaspers but does seem to express his meaning.)

[102]Ph III, pp. 114-115.

[103]In view of remarks made in the preceding chapter

fact as no actual rising of the sun at all, might still in
an historic moment serve reliably as language of transcendence.[104]

Yet even for the individual such experience leads
directly to articulation as the effort to understand, and for
humanity as a whole such articulation serves not only the
quest for understanding but the necessary transmission of the
initial experience from individual to individual and from
generation to generation. Historically, according to Jaspers,
such articulation first took concrete form as myth, religion,
and art ("the second language") and later led to speculative
reflection on these concrete articulations in various meta-
physical categories and systems ("the third language").[105]
The second and third languages, then, constitute what Jaspers
calls "the world of ciphers," the various historic monuments
and living traditions of those stories and images, events,
rites, and beliefs, ideas and arguments in which human beings

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about Jaspers' dark view of nature or world, it is
worth noting here that the world which literally held no
word for man in answer to his fundamental questions might
still as cipher function as the language of transcendence.
The shift from consciousness-at-large to Existenz, in other
words, enables man "to find the right way into the world"
(Ph II, p. 5), to "experience the world as the language of
God . . . the meeting point of that which is eternal and
that which manifests itself in time" (PSP, p. 36). In
Ehrlich's phrase (p. 253, n. 4), the world functions to
"mediate the immediacy" of existential relation to trans-
cendence. On ciphers of nature, understood more specifi-
cally as the natural world, cf. Ph III, pp. 152-159 and
PFR, pp. 96-98, 168-186.

[104]HC, p. 16.

[105]Ph III, pp. 115-119.

have thought and acted "in the direction of transcendence."106

Thus while one may be uplifted by the first experience of

transcendence in ciphers in the most startling and unforeseen

ways, it is the world of ciphers, the second and third languages

as they are concretely available in one's historic situation,

and as they are taken up in historic adoption, which provide

clarity and continuity for faith.

For Jaspers, then, while the world of ciphers is as

vast as human history, all ciphers clearly are not equally

possible languages for all men. Nor is what Jaspers calls

"the reading of ciphers," the struggle of thinking and living

in ciphers to hear the truth of transcendence, the same in

each of the different realms of ciphers.107 Clearly the way

of the independent philosopher, wrestling with the heritage

of great philosophical thought regardless of when or where

it originated, is different from the more historically defined

and communal path of the religious man.108 In all cases,

106Philosophy, then, is as much a thinking in ciphers
as myth and religion. It does not provide a method of demytho-
logizing or a key to the real (literal, sole) meaning of the
ciphers. Myth and religion are not, in other words, transformed
into their true substance as philosophy. Rather myth and
religion and philosophy each provide an authentic possibility
or way in the world of ciphers. This, of course, is the basic
point in Jaspers' critique of Bultmann. Cf. MC, pp. 15 ss.

107The reading of ciphers is not deciphering in the
sense of movement from cipher to the real or literal meaning
somehow behind the cipher. Such deciphering is, for Jaspers,
clearly impossible. All interpretation of ciphers remains a
thinking in ciphers and thus can never be final. "The essence
of what a cipher is can be stated only in another cipher."
PFR, p. 116.

108PSP, pp. 111-117.

however, the contents of particular traditions (whether
philosophical or religious) can be the possible language of
transcendence <u>only for Existenz</u>, and then <u>only insofar as they
are appropriated as ciphers</u> (i.e., only "on the premise that we
keep them suspended").

> Transcendent reality, to be experienced by
> Existenz alone, is manifested in ciphers.[109]

> What speaks in ciphers is not heard by any
> intellect . . . /but/ only by the freedom
> of Existenz with which transcendence
> communicates in that language.[110]

Thus the fundamental perversion of ciphers occurs
not when the cipher world is simply observed as a phenomenon
of human history. As such, in the study of religions, for
instance, particular ciphers become quite legitimate objects
of historical knowledge. Rather ciphers are perverted when,
in Jaspers' terms, they are regarded as "embodied transcendence" --
as a definite grasp (known or revealed) of transcendence in this
particular object of perception or thought.[111] Such definite
attainment of transcendence is clearly impossible in terms of
the foundations of Jaspers' thought. (Being-in-itself does not
appear in the subject-object dichotomy; what appears is always

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109PPR, p. 95.

110PPR, p. 96.

111PPR, pp. 100 ss. Here again, in only slightly
altered form, is Jaspers' continual critique of "catholicism"
as the unwarranted claim to know what cannot be known. In
PPR, of course, the Christian doctrine of revelation as
Jaspers understands it is the particular form of embodiment
under attack.

particular or phenomenal being.) If, then, "the reality of transcendence is thus captured . . . we have lost transcendence."[112] And the possibility of Existenz as the only way to the real truth of transcendence has also been lost. For the only appropriate response to embodied transcendence is blind (idolatrous) obedience and authoritative preservation in fixed (dogmatic) form. Yet in such form the cipher language grows silent, its light darkened. "Any fixation would extinguish them. To stay alive they must remain suspended."[113] For it is precisely as suspended, as not objectively definite but ambiguously aglow with possible depth, that they appeal not to knowing consciousness but to possible Existenz. Jesus as the incarnate God is intellectual nonsense and a religious offense; but as unique cipher of God's presence to man and man's to God the figure of Jesus and christological doctrine provide an immense depth of possible truth.[114] The truth of the cipher will speak, however, only to Existenz in its struggle to plumb that depth, and even then its truth will never be attained unambiguously and finally, but only historically.

Ciphers, then, when not proclaimed as definite truth to be learned and obeyed, call to that in man which moves beyond

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[112]PFR, p. 100.

[113]PFR, p. 124.

[114]cf. PFR, pp. 109, 145-148, 161-164.

the limits of the secure and knowable. They invite participation in what Jaspers calls "the twofold struggle" - - the struggle, against our own (idolatrous) hunger for secured objectivity, to keep the ciphers suspended by the endlessly dialectical negation of their objectivity, and the subsequent communicative struggle ("in the realm of ciphers") of interpretation against interpretation, cipher against cipher.[115] In the movement of these two, inseparable struggles (as, for instance, in the quest for the truth of a particular religion or in the dialogue of religions), particular ciphers may become, historically, the language of transcendence.

It is clear, then, that Jaspers' discussion of ciphers recapitulates the basic aspects of his defense of particularity. The contents of a particular faith may be appropriated only as ciphers, but the cipher language of transcendence can be heard only in particular, historic appropriation. Ciphers are as such always particular (and plural). The language of transcendence speaks not everywhere, not through "ciphers-in-general," but in the language of this particular cipher heard in the historic and communicative struggle for its truth. The reading of particular ciphers, in other words, is accomplished by "adoptive interpretation." And in such reading, "the interpreter does not come close to them until he lives them (in ihnen mitlebt)."[116]

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[115]PFR, pp. 125-126.

[116]PFR, pp. 119, 121, 127.

Ciphers, then, are not (objective, embodied) mediators of transcendence, but they do mediate the "forever new immediacy" of existential awareness of transcendence.[117]

3.

The third, and final aspect of Jaspers' response to the type of criticism outlined at the end of the preceding chapter concerns the adequacy of his account of historic particularity for the understanding of _religious_ truth. Given that this account of particularity does permit (in Jaspers' view) a significant plurality, is it adequate as an account of religious plurality and thus as the basis for an affirmation of the possibility of a plurality of true religions?

Here the essence of Jaspers' response can be put quite briefly (it is a qualified, yet definite "yes"), because Jaspers really takes very little time to argue the question. The bulk of his discussion of religion, as already suggested at various points in the preceding pages, consists of an extensive, rather repetitive critique of religious self-understanding on the grounds that it constitutes an idolatrous fixation or embodiment of transcendence and that, consequently, it becomes an authoritarian negation of freedom (Existenz) as the sole authentic path to transcendent truth.[118] Correspond-

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[117] PSP, p. 11. Cf. Jean Wahl, _La Pensée de l'Existence_, p. 127.

[118] It is not Rome alone, nor even Christian orthodoxy generally, but religious orthodoxy in any form which here stands accused of the "Babylonian captivity" of true faith.

ingly much of the discussion of Jaspers from religious quarters
has focused on the inaccuracy of his critique of religion.
Indeed it is difficult for a religious person to recognize his
own belief and practice in Jaspers' at times tiresome rehearsal
of standard Enlightenment and liberal attacks on religion as
superstitious materialization of the divine and slavish obedience
to narrowly dogmatic authorities.[119] All too often, in fact,
Jaspers betrays what seems surprising ignorance of actual
religions and their many specific differences.[120] Jaspers, of
course, might well respond that it is the (academic and pre-
dominantly liberal) theologians who are out of touch with the
reality of religion as it is lived by the masses. Yet the
theologians could in turn respond that the critique of what is
idolatrous in popular religion has been and remains a primary
concern of authentic religion.[121]

Yet the thrust and parry of such exchange is, for
present purposes at least, really somewhat beside the point --
as the continual return to and even fascination with Jaspers

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[119]Cf. the previously cited work by Heinrich Fries
for one of the more polemic rebuttals from the religious side.

[120]H. Barth, p. 292.

[121]Consider the following remark by the American
theologian William Stringfellow in his "Introduction" to
Daniel Berrigan's They Call Us Dead Men (NY: Macmillan, 1966),
p. 11: "This book is not religious in the conventional sense
of that term: it does not expound dogma; it does not resort
to jargon; it upholds no ritualistic vanities . . . it does
not cater to the lust for indulgences; it does not assault
the conscience, nor does it insult intelligence."

by religious thinkers would seem to suggest.[122] Indeed

what is most surprising about much religious commentary on

Jaspers, in light of his persistent attacks, is the lack of

concern to spend much time and space responding to this nega-

tive critique and the evident concern to test the viability

of his proffered alternative.[123] And this, far from consti-

tuting a failure to take Jaspers seriously, is actually quite

in accord with his intentions since, as already noted, the

goal of his discussion of religion is "to promote truth in

religion by means of a philosophical critique." The purpose

of his constantly repeated attacks is to enable the churches

to crack "the shells of their dogmas and institutions and

/find/ in them a contemporary voice."[124] If religious believers

no longer recognize themselves in his critique, then so be it!

Perhaps the necessary transformation of religious self-under-

standing is already underway and religious truth is increasingly

understood by religious men in terms approaching Jaspers' own.

Thus the real issue is not whether Jaspers' negative

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[122]The most recently published example of that continued
interest is the study of Gotteserfahrung und Glaube by Helmut
Pfeiffer (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1975). The work is subtitled
Interpretation und Theologische Aneignung der Philosophie Karl
Jaspers' ("interpretation and theological appropriation"). The
present study is likewise, of course, evidence of such continued
interest.

[123]The work of Xavier Tilliette would be the most note-
worthy example, but the concern to reformulate faith in ways
understandable to "modern man" is evidently a preoccupation of
much contemporary theological work.

[124]PFR, p. 322.

critique of religion is accurate, but whether his positive
prescriptions are adequate. At least for the topic under
discussion here, the question is whether his analysis of truth
as historicity (and thus as particularity and plurality) is
adequate as an understanding of religious truth. And Jaspers'
answer, as noted, is a straightforward, albeit qualified,
affirmative.

For Jaspers, in fact, the real question is not whether
his analysis of truth fits the actuality of the religions,
but whether the religions for their own survival can be
transformed so as to fit the conditions of truth made
inescapable by the present crisis - - and that, for him,
inevitably means transformation according to the understanding
of truth outlined in his writings.[125] Jaspers does not want
boldly to claim that his writings must now become the norm in
terms of which the canons of the great religions are to be
interpreted.[126] One of the first qualifications he makes
regarding his position is that the required transformation
of the religions must be accomplished from within, by virtue
of their own dynamism, as religious persons struggle in the
present crisis to return to the "primal source" of their own

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[125]PFR, pp. 231 ss.; PSP, pp. 95 ss.

[126]In this context Jaspers remarks, quite sincerely
it would seem: "How oddly disproportionate it is for an individual
to write about such things! How infinitesmal his thinking looks
against the overwhelming sweep of history and its spiritual forces."
PFR, p. 322.

traditions.[127] The philosopher, who stands on the outside, "cannot possibly tell the theologians and the churches what to do," but he can help to "prepare the ground and . . . produce awareness of the intellectual situation necessary for the growth of what he himself cannot create," and he can raise "questions that he cannot answer, though he knows that the future will assuredly give the answer."[128] In his "loving struggle" with religious believers, moreover, he cannot but assert what he believes to be true - - that faith must be transformed according to the basic conditions made inescapable in our day and clarified via foundational thinking.

Thus while specifics of the necessary change in religious self-understanding are generally not discussed by Jaspers, the broad lines of such change are clear and can be summarized by the statement that the contents of each religious tradition must be reappropriated as ciphers.[129] Speaking specifically to the religious situation in the West, Jaspers briefly suggests the significance of this change for "biblical religion."[130] It is, he stresses, "not the substance of the biblical faith that needs transforming, but its appearance . . . its garb."[131] Yet this

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[127]PSP, pp. 96, 103; PFR, p. 322.

[128]PSP, pp. 108-109.

[129]PFR, pp. 100 ss., 337 ss.

[130]Cf. PFR, pp. 329-356; PSP, pp. 82-112.

[131]PFR, p. 330.

change must nonetheless be "a change as far-reaching as all
the other changes that have taken place in our era - - or else
the eternal truth of biblical religion will recede beyond the
horizon of man - - and it is impossible to say what might take
its place."[132] It means a change in one's appropriation of
the Bible - - from divinely inspired book (the idea of revelation
must itself be understood as a cipher[133]) to a compilation of "a
thousand years of religious, mythical, historic, and existential
experience," a rich record of embattled, conflicting ciphers
which invites and requires historic adoption.[134] Thus, too,
the person Jesus cannot literally be taken as the God-man, but
as a magnificant cipher of the legitimacy of ciphers (mediators
between God and man) and of man's inexpressible closeness to
God.[135] More generally, then, the claims to dogmatic and exclusive
truth must be abandoned so that the eternal truth of the tradition
might be "retrieved from fixations" by the historic penetration
and adoption of its contents as ciphers.[136]

Yet this call for the transformation of the religions
would seem to raise again the basic question about the religious
adequacy of Jaspers' understanding of truth. Does not the trans-
formation of particular religious contents into ever-ambiguous

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[132]PSP, p. 109.

[133]PFR, pp. 339-342.

[134]PFR, pp. 330-337.

[135]VdW, pp. 1052-1053; PFR, pp. 337-339.

[136]PSP, pp. 104-106; PFR, pp. 342-343.

ciphers ("mere ciphers) negate the positivity which Jaspers himself regards as the distinguishing characteristic of religion? Does it not in effect destroy the basic religious passions of reverence and (communal) worship, replacing them with (individual) philosophic contemplation and existential decision? In Jaspers' own words, "If we deny embodiment of the divine, are we not sloughing off everything sacramental?"[137] In response, Jaspers would admit the risk involved in this transformation, but would argue that precisely this risk might call forth the earnestness or seriousness of faith in adoptive interpretation. Authentic faith, in other words, must run the risk of freedom.[138] Only in freedom does sacramentalism "not lure us into those embodying traps," yet in freedom, "ritualism and sacramentalism are possible in a life with ciphers."[139] The transformation of positive religious contents into ciphers, then, does not for Jaspers destroy their positivity and particularity. Rather it "retrieves them from fixations," making their authentic appropriation in faith a real possibility while at the same time preserving them from the type of reductionism which is

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[137]PFR, p. 101; cf. p. 103: "The great question is whether anything stripped of corporeality can remain effective as a mere cipher."

[138]PFR, pp. 353, 321, 329.

[139]PFR, p. 101. Cf., p. 112: "Where worship was regarded as cipher it seemed it could be solemn and serious in freedom, weighty in suspension, without loss of vigour." Jaspers' protestantism is evident in this approach to the sacramental. In historical terms, he clearly sides with Zwingli against Luther and Catholicism.

involved, for instance, in Bultmann's disastrous program of demythologizing.[140]

For Jaspers, then, not only is his understanding of truth as historic adoption of ciphers religiously adequate, it is in fact absolutely necessary as the basis for that reappropriation of religious faith which is required in the present crisis. It provides that "common framework so broadly based that historically heterogeneous faiths could communicate in it without abandoning themselves" and "could transform themselves by their own depth . . . . into the new foundations that human seriousness needs under the conditions of the coming age."[141] It opens the possibility of a future not of facile tolerance (which is really indifference), but of the loving struggle of communication in real tolerance. "For authentic truth arises only where faiths meet in the presence of the encompassing."[142] Thus it opens the possibility, for the

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[140]While the issues in the famous Jaspers-Bultmann debate are complex, it is fairly accurate to say that Jaspers disagrees with Bultmann at two fundamental points. And these points not only serve to summarize Jaspers' understanding of religious truth, but testify to the seriousness of his concern for specifically religious positivity. In the first place, as would be expected, he attacks Bultmann's rigid, exclusivist orthodoxy. Despite all the pseudo-liberalism of Bultmann's program, it finally proclaims the one Christian truth as the saving truth for all men. Secondly, however, he attacks the demythologizing program because it robs Christianity of precisely that rich particular world of ciphers by means of which it might serve as a vehicle of faith. It impoverishes religion in the name of the pseudo-scientific world-view of modern man. Cf. MC, passim; R, pp. 782-783.

[141]PFR, p. 88.

[142]PSP, p. 181. Cf. RE, pp. 100-103.

first time, of a real unity of mankind - - not via an unrealizable universal faith, "but in boundless communication of the historically different in never-ending dialogue, rising to heights of noble emulation."[143]

Such, then, is Jaspers' controlling vision of religious plurality and truth, and his corresponding claim that the religions must be transformed in terms of that vision. Once again, of course, Jaspers qualifies this claim - - not only, as already noted, by stressing that this transformation can be accomplished only from within the churches, but by admitting that finally, after every effort at comprehension, religion remains the uncomprehended other which stands in polar opposition to philosophy. The philosopher cannot but articulate the claims which thought seems to render inescapable, yet he too finally speaks in ciphers and in faith and must remain open to the otherness of the religious world which escapes his grasp.[144] Yet while such qualification is undoubtably truthful on Jaspers' part, it is not particularly significant for the present discussion. What is significant is the adequacy of the idea of religious truth proposed by Jaspers, however gently that proposal is made at certain times. The following chapter will attempt to evaluate that adequacy.

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[143] WW, p. 106.

[144] Cf. PFR, pp. 356-363; 321-322.

V.

CRITICISM

Up to this point in the present work I have tried as
much as possible to let Jaspers speak with his own voice (just
as, in the introductory chapter, I attempted to present the
problem as it is understood in much contemporary thinking).
Interpretation, of course, is inevitable especially in the type
of summary argument presented in the preceding chapters. Yet
the direction, the sequence of issues raised, and the various
twists and frequent repetitions in the argument have been an
attempt to represent the direction and the twisting, repetitive
movement characteristic of Jaspers' thinking. My own comments
have been limited to remarks in various footnotes and questions
raised at the end of Chapters II and III. In the present
chapter, however, I shall try to develop the criticism of
Jaspers which is either stated or implied in those notes and
questions in order to evaluate the adequacy of his proposed
resolution to the problem of religious pluralism and truth.

The primary purpose of this concluding chapter, then,
is to answer the question, "Does Jaspers succeed in providing
a way of understanding religious truth so that more than one
religion may strictly speaking be said to be true?" As
indicated at the very beginning of this study, the question

is answered in the negative since Jaspers' resolution to the problem of religious pluralism and truth is found wanting. Yet his thought is also taken to be typical or representative of much contemporary thinking about the problem which builds upon funda- mentally similar foundations and moves in the same direction or within the same basic framework.[1] Thus a secondary and more general purpose of both the preceding analysis and the present critique is to understand Jaspers' thinking (and by implication the type of thinking it represents) in order to understand why, despite much that seems promising, it nonetheless goes wrong. Why is it, in other words, that a thinking which contains many of the elements of what would seem to constitute an adequate analysis of religious truth in a context of religious pluralism somehow still fails to bring these various pieces of the puzzle together in an adequate way? An answer to that question, although far from being a resolution of the problem of pluralism and truth, might at least suggest different and hopefully more adequate directions for thought about the problem.

Yet the difficulty of any attempt to develop a serious critique of Jaspers' thinking has already been noted. Because his work attempts to deal systematically with the deeper currents of modern thought, it takes one to the center of today's most

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[1]Although it sounds a bit grandiose, one might well refer to the type of thinking here as "modern" (Kantian or post-Kantian) and thus to its effort to resolve the problem of pluralism and truth as "the modern project," or at least "a modern project," concerning religious pluralism. That Jaspers, at least, wants to understand his thinking in those terms should be clear from introductory remarks in Chapter I (esp. pp. 25-28) and the entire discussion of Chapter II.

fundamental and controversial issues. Thus a fully adequate critique can finally flow only from an equally clear and fundamental position as regards those issues. In the absence of such a position, one runs the risk of merely stringing together comment after comment without any real unity and without any assurance of having touched the crucial or fundamental point. The ideal requirements of criticism, then, place serious strains upon the practical limitations of time and space, to say nothing of those more significant limitations imposed by the critics' own want of wit and wisdom. For all these difficulties, however, the primary focus of the following critique remains the question of the adequacy of Jaspers' understanding of religious truth as it purports to resolve the problems posed by contemporary consciousness of religious pluralism. Insofar as discussion of that question inevitably involves more fundamental issues, those issues will be taken up. -- without, however, any claim that they will have been adequately or thoroughly discussed.

Thus after (1) a brief, introductory section on the way in which the critique of Jaspers will be approached, (2) discussion will focus upon the failure of Jaspers' thought to account for the religious plurality it intends to affirm, and thus his failure to clarify the logic whereby a plurality of religions could be equally true. A concluding section (3) will explore the reasons for this failure and attempt to draw out implications for a more adequate understanding of religious plurality and truth.

I.

One of the ways in which a critique of Jaspers'
discussion of religious pluralism might be developed is exem-
plified by the type of argument made (at least implicitly) in
much theological writing.[2] From within the context of one
particular religion, the theologians basically argue that
Jaspers in effect solves the problem only by dissolving it.
His call for the transformation of the religions is understood
not as a change _in_ religion, but as a change _of_ the religions
into something else, into a general philosophical faith. It
removes the stumbling block, the concrete particularity of
origin and tradition characteristic of religious faith, and
thereby removes the very point at which the various religions
are most different (and whence other differences, above all
oppositions of doctrine, flow). For it is clear that Judaism,
Christianity, and Islam (at least as traditionally understood)
originated in and continue to stand (or fall) by the truth of
what Emil Fackenheim has recently called "root experiences"
of God's presence and action in history.[3] It is equally clear
that the origin of other religions in historical events, founders,
and scriptures which are taken to be revelatory (even if the
relation of the divine and history is not understood as it is

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[2]Cf., for instance, Tilliette, pp. 120 ss., or
Klein, pp. 216-234 (where recent theological discussion of
Jaspers is reviewed).

[3]_God's Presence in History_ (New York: New York
University Press, 1970), pp. 8-11, 30.

in biblical religion) likewise establishes the basis of their distinctiveness and may well, then, constitute "the largest difficulty in the way of religious agreement."[4] Thus when Jaspers would transform the understanding of such concrete, revelatory origins (and of the doctrine which flows from them) into ciphers of human transcending, he would change not something accidental, but something essential to the actuality of the religions and to their diversity. To put the matter more generally, by means of that type of symbolic understanding of religion which has today become widespread, the real differences among the religions are in effect negated and the "problem of pluralism" is resolved - - that is, shown to be really no problem at all.[5]

In response to such criticism Jaspers would, I think, reiterate (at least) two of the central points made in his discussion of religious truth.[6] In the first place, he would continue to maintain that attention to the new realities of our age (as articulated in critical philosophy) simply makes a

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[4]John Hick, _Philosophy of Religion_, p. 128.

[5]Cf. Charles Davis, _Christ and the World Religions_, pp. 26-39 and the chapter on "Religious Symbolism and 'Universal' Religion" in Maurice Friedmann's _Touchstones of Reality_ (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974), pp. 216-233. Friedmann (p. 226) cites Abraham Heschel's pointed observation that "in earlier times, symbolism was regarded as a form of _religious thinking_. In modern times religion is regarded as a _form of symbolic thinking_."

[6]Although not focused in exactly this way, Jaspers makes essentially the same argument in his "Reply To My Critics" in Schilpp. Cf. R, pp. 777-785.

transformation of traditional religious self-understanding inescapable. Truth demands that sacred origins, revelations, and doctrines be reappropriated today as ciphers of transcendence. Any other less critical understanding of religious traditions is no longer tenable. Secondly, however, and more positively, he would argue that while the appropriation of religious origins and beliefs as ciphers may seem like the dissolution of all particularity when viewed from within the fortress of orthodoxy, it in fact constitutes the only possible and still very real affirmation of particularity, and thus of plurality. He would, in other words, vigorously reject the charge that his call for the transformation of the religions results in a loss of the concrete particularity of the various religions and thus of their differences and real opposition.

While Jaspers would, of course, conclude his rebuttal with the standard caveat that for him religious faith finally remains inexplicably other, he would also repeat his complaint that "discussion with theologians always breaks off at the crucial point. They fall silent . . . assert something unconditionally . . . and in the last analysis they are not really interested. For in the last analysis they are certain of their truth, terrifyingly certain."[7] The theologians, in reply, would find Jaspers' brand of tolerance to be likewise

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[7]PSP, p. 77, and CM, p. 112 (I have used parts of each translation of the same passage).

terrifyingly certain, closed, and dogmatic. Thus the argument
seems to get nowhere as Jaspers and the theologians talk past
each other, each from within a set position. The theologians
base their critique on the actuality of religious faith.
Jaspers replies that while he knows what the religions actually
are it is that actuality which must be changed and can be
changed without destroying religious particularity.

However valid, then, the theological critique of
Jaspers' discussion of pluralism and truth (and I find myself
fundamentally in agreement with it), it probably does not provide
the best avenue of approach for a critical understanding of
Jaspers' ideas. The adequacy of Jaspers' position can perhaps
be better evaluated, and the reasons for its inadequacy more
clearly understood, not by a critique which originates within
the particularity of religious faith (and thus "from outside"
Jaspers' thought), but by an approach which seeks to evaluate
Jaspers on his own terms, to develop a critique "from within"
his own position. Such, at any rate, is the approach taken
here.[8]

The basic argument of this critique from within is that
there is not simply a gap, but actually a contradiction between
intention and performance whereby key aspects of Jaspers'
performance negate or undercut those other aspects of his
thought which are crucial for the intended affirmation of

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[8]The two approaches ("from outside" and "from within")
should actually meet and overlap since the basic issues involved
would finally be the same.

religious particularity and plurality. To put the matter in slightly different terms, there is, as already noted,[9] a pervasive ambiguity or tension in Jaspers' thinking such that what he gives, so to speak, with one hand he takes back with the other. What he intends to affirm and argues persuasively for at certain points he then not only fails to sustain but actually negates at other points in his arguments.

It has already been suggested that this fundamental tension might be understood historically as a basic irreconcilability between the older traditions and the new conditions within which Jaspers would reappropriate them.[10] Yet it can be even more clearly understood in terms of the general dialectical structure of Jaspers' thinking. For at various levels and in different ways the structure of that thinking consists of a continual "holding together" of polar or opposed elements - - past traditions with new conditions, and more specifically (for present purposes) limitation, mediation, and concrete particularity with breakthrough, immediacy, and transcendence. It is this structure which necessitates the continual movement characteristic of Jaspers' thinking and which thus opens the possibility of that (non-cognitive) act of transcending which is its real center. Yet it is, I think, this very structure, or its failure, which does not simply illustrate but is in fact the basis of the pervasive and destructive tension in Jaspers'

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[9]Cf. above, p. 33.

[10]Cf. above, pp. 79.

thought. For while Jaspers intends this structure as a
continual holding-together of polar elements (dialectic
understood as endless movement, circling, and suspension),
it becomes in reality the means whereby the various elements
of one side of the polarity are effectively taken over and
transformed by the other side (dialectic as negation and
transformation). In the specific case of religious truth,
then, while Jaspers intends to hold together historic partic-
ularity and transcending faith, or mediation and immediacy,
so that religious particularity (and plurality) can be affirmed
even within modern critical consciousness, the actual if
unintended result of his thinking is that all particular
mediations are transformed and effectively negated by a more
fundamental emphasis on immediacy.[11]

The critique from within, then, is essentially that
there is in Jaspers' thinking a contradiction between intention
and performance such that he fails to establish a logical basis·
for the affirmation of a possible plurality of true religions,
and that this failure is rooted in a basic antagonism between
conflicting elements of his own thinking. At this point,
however, the critique has been merely asserted, not argued.
Thus a more detailed review of specific aspects of Jaspers'

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[11]The confusion of the two senses of dialectic, of
the intended holding-together with the actual transformation,
is, I think, at least part of the explanation for the ambiguity
one often feels in reading Jaspers,·the sense that, as noted
above, the pieces of the puzzle seem to be there, yet somehow
not put together correctly. And Jaspers' language, talk of
"mediated immediacy" for instance, serves only to heighten
such confusion - - perhaps even for Jaspers himself.

thinking is needed. The central issue, of course, continues
to be Jaspers' account of religious particularity -- whether
his understanding of religious truth, and the dialectical
logic upon which that understanding is based, does or does
not sustain the possibility of religious particularity and
thus the possibility of religious differences, real oppositions,
and a real plurality of true religions. For the basic question
under discussion in this dissertation is not, to repeat, a
substantive question concerning the truth of Jaspers' existential
affirmation of transcendence any more than it is a substantive
question about the truth or falsity of the claims made by
particular religions. The question throughout has been, rather,
a logical one. Does Jaspers provide an understanding of truth
in religion which reconciles the requirements of an adequate
idea of truth with the exigencies of contemporary consciousness
of religious pluralism (i.e., with irreducible differences or
real oppositions, and the possibility of a plurality of equally
true religions)? The following critique is an attempt to
show that he does not -- that the logic of his idea of
existential truth, while it does allow a certain, indeed an
inevitable sense of plurality, effectively negates that stronger
or more problematic sense of plurality whence the original
question of plurality and truth arises. He does this, moreover,
contrary to what is intended and explicitly affirmed in his
idea of existential truth, by undercutting the account of
religious particularity which is basic to that stronger sense

of pluralism.[12]

2.

Since intention and performance are the operative
categories for this critique, I should begin with a brief
restatement of Jaspers' intention before attempting to show
how it is betrayed by the destructive tension between key
aspects of his performance. As already noted, the importance
of Jaspers' discussion derives in part at least from the fact
that he understands the question of religious pluralism and
truth within the broader context of the crisis of our age and
thus as a political question of immense significance.[13] It
is his conviction that in this crisis the future of our
humanity depends not upon some wholesale embrace of technology
accompanied, perhaps, by romantic visions of a great leap
beyond the ruins of the present towards a global future and a
new, universal faith. Yet neither does it depend upon a
desperate clinging to past orthodoxies. Rejecting both alter-
natives, Jaspers stresses that a truly human _and_ truly global
future depends, rather, upon the possibility of contemporary
reappropriation of the great religious traditions _in their_

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[12]This critique would not, of course, mean that
the actual (as distinct from the intended) achievement of
Jaspers' thought is wrong. The existential logic of faith
which is described by Jaspers' philosophy may well be
correct even if it does not provide a basis for affirming the
possibility of a plurality of true religions.

[13]Cf. above, pp. 19, 24, 31, 42, 44.

<u>concrete diversity</u>. In the broadest sense, then, the intention
of his discussion of religion is to provide a logical basis for
that contemporary reappropriation, one which would at once rescue
the traditional faiths from the sclerosis into which they have
sunken and simultaneously provide a framework for their mutual
recognition and inter-communication. Thus in terms of the
specific issue of pluralism and truth his intention is to
provide an understanding of the logic of religious truth which
makes possible a strong affirmation of the truth of one's
particular faith without the concomitant claim to its normative
or exclusive character. Or, to put the matter more positively,
his intention is to provide a basis, within contemporary
consciousness of pluralism, for an absolute commitment to the
truth of one religious particularity which simultaneously
allows the possible truth (in an identical sense) of other
particular faiths.

The performance whereby Jaspers seeks to realize this
intention is, of course, the whole of that extended and systematic
thinking which has been recapitulated in the preceding chapters.
For present purposes, however, the core of that performance can
be indicated in terms of Jaspers' account of the logic of
religious truth as an existential logic - - a logic which,
in direct contrast to the logic of cognitive truth, <u>must always
be historic and particular and, while necessarily absolute, can
never be universal and exclusive</u>. For the movement at the
center of this logic, a movement at once of thought and of

freedom arises only at the limits of cognitive truth where the security of universal claims must be abandoned. Only in the absence of exclusive cognitive claims is there the possibility of that shift in subjectivity which constitutes an awakening in basic or unconditional trust, a coming to oneself as Existenz which is simultaneously an awareness of transcendence. Yet Jaspers insists, as we have seen, that this existential awakening occurs not in abstracted isolation, but in concrete or historical struggle within one's real situation. It leads to truth only insofar as it leads to particular commitment, to what Jaspers describes as adoption or the personal appropriation of an always particular faith. Such truth is existential, then, not simply because it is truth of and for life, truth which "counts for the whole of one's life," but because it is truth attained and affirmed only in passionately engaged living. It is, in the standard cliché, not a matter of dispassionate objectivity, but of pathos and participation, and thus of particularity.

For Jaspers, moreover, this necessarily particular yet non-exclusive logic of religious truth is dictated not only by the nature of religious subjectivity, but also by the reality of the object which it affirms.[14] For that object,

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[14]The word "object" is here used only in the broadest sense to refer to that transcendence which, in se non-objectifiable, is the goal or object of religious affirmation. It might, of course, be conceptualized, even within the same tradition, in either subjective or objective categories (e.g., Atman and Brahman).

which Jaspers prefers to speak of simply as "transcendence,"
cannot be an object of knowledge and thus can neither be known
nor revealed in any universally valid way. Yet as the object
or content of religious truth, transcendence must still be made
present or revealed _to_ human life -- conceived in the categories
of human thought and concretized in the forms of human action.
In Jaspers' terms, the language of transcendence must be mediated
through the language of ciphers, that multiform world of myth
and story, parable and paradox, abstract doctrine and sacramental
form which makes up the content of the different traditions of
religious (and philosophical) faith. The truth of transcendence,
however, is not simply present ("embodied" would be Jaspers'
term) in the contents of the traditions so that their various
truth claims might all be affirmed as equally true. (On the
contrary, it is the clear oppositions among these truth claims
which gives rise to the problem of pluralism and truth in the
first place.) Truth is revealed or attained, rather, only
insofar as the traditional contents, understood as ciphers,
are taken up and transformed in that dialectical process which
Jaspers speaks of as "adoptive interpretation." It is, in
other words, only as part of the personal and communicative
struggle to be faithful to, yet to wrestle with and to live
into the truth of ever particular beliefs (or contents) that
they might mediate historically the truth of transcendence.
The language of transcendence, then, is spoken only in
particular languages or ciphers. In such particularity the

truth which is heard is absolutely true, yet the speaking and
hearing is such that it cannot be taken as universally or
normatively true, but must admit the possibility of other,
even of opposed truths.

Once again, then, the existential logic clarified by
Jaspers' discussion is such that religious truth must always be
particular and thus can, it would seem, admit of real plurality.
Thus Jaspers' performance with its central emphasis upon and
its specific understanding of the necessary particularity of
all religious truth claims would seem to be perfectly consistent
with his intentions. For it is on the basis of this existential
understanding of religious truth that he rejects not only
orthodox exclusivity, but also that type of pervasive relativism
which reduces the plurality of religions to so many culturally
specific symbol systems. And it is on the same basis that he
dismisses those easy visions of the progressive convergence of
the world religions, emphasizing rather his own hope for the
continued "loving struggle" of divergent faiths. Thus while
one might well disagree with the content of that analysis, it
does not seem possible, at least at this point, to fault his
performance for its failure to sustain his intentions. On the
contrary, it is the centrality of emphasis upon historicity and
particularity which most seems to recommend Jaspers' proposed
resolution to the problem of pluralism and truth.

Yet, as suggested above, what Jaspers gives (or seems

to give) with one hand he takes back with the other and it is precisely this central and crucial emphasis on particularity which his performance fails in the end to sustain. For on closer examination in terms of the full and dialectical framework of Jaspers' thought his continual affirmations of the necessary particularity of religious truth are not quite what they seem to be or, more significantly, are not what they must be if they are to provide a basis for the affirmation of a possible plurality of true religions. To put the matter in different terms, for Jaspers, as we have seen, particular religious claims might be affirmed as true only insofar as they are understood dialectically. Jaspers, of course, is not alone in stressing the necessity of a dialectical appropriation of religious language.[15] Yet what he means by a dialectical understanding of particular claims, or the character and context of the dialectical appropriation which he calls for, is quite specific. And it is, I submit, his specific dialectical understanding of religious truth which not only fails to sustain but actually undercuts the central emphasis on particularity which is so crucial for the intended affirmation of a possible plurality of true religions.

I can perhaps best begin to argue this contention by reiterating that the fundamental tenet, so to speak, of the logic

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[15]Not only does most analysis of religion contain some similar sort of qualification about the character of "God talk," but the actual usage of the various traditions, I think it could be shown, is on the whole equally careful to balance affirmation with negation.

of religious truth proposed by Jaspers is not simply that truth

is attained only via historic adoption, but that such adoption

involves a process of adoptive interpretation. It involves, in

other words, a <u>transformation</u> of the particular contents of

belief whereby they are appropriated as ciphers. Thus the

particular contents of belief are kept dialectically suspended

so that they might serve as vehicles for the free transcending

of Existenz and thereby mediate the authentic language of

transcendence. But what, it must be asked, is the significance

of this transformation for that particularity which has been so

strongly affirmed as central to the logic of religious truth?

In what sense does religious truth remain particular within

this dialectic of adoptive interpretation? Or, to put the

central question here more directly, if the problem of

pluralism and truth arises because the specific contents or

claims of particular faiths are opposed, do such particular

oppositions remain once the contents of faith have been

appropriated as ciphers? If they do not - - if, in other

words, Jaspers' thought fails to sustain the strong sense of

particularity upon which such opposition is based - - then

in a real sense he may be said not to have resolved the problem

of pluralism and truth but to have dissolved it. For if

particular religious faiths might be true, yet not in terms of

those specific contents whereby they stand opposed to other

faiths, then while there would still be a plurality of

particular faiths, there would be no problem of pluralism

and truth. A plurality of religions could be true simply as so many accidentally (i.e., historically) divergent ways of expressing the same truth or, alternatively, as so many necessary, but again only accidentally different occasions for the affirmation of that (one) truth which transcends them all.

At the risk of being repetitious, I should perhaps sharpen the issue here by delineating more explicitly two quite different senses in which particularity might be affirmed in the discussion of religious pluralism. In the first and, I think, stronger sense, the idea of particularity refers to the particular contents of a given faith -- to the particularity of the "root experience" or revelatory events at the origin of that faith and of the specific ritual forms and doctrinal claims which flow from that origin. When this first sense of particularity is involved in the assertion that a particular faith is true, it means that the particular contents of that faith are true -- however much those contents cannot be taken literally or dogmatically or magically; however much, that is, they must be dialectically negated as well as affirmed in the adoptive struggle to live into their truth. It means, to use Jaspers' terms, that these contents in their particularity mediate the truth of transcendence. By way of a convenient shorthand, then, this first sense of particularity could be referred to as mediatory particularity or particularity

__as mediation.__ In the second sense, the idea of particularity

refers to the fact that human life must unavoidably be lived

in some particular situation, and human thought necessarily

involves some particular contents. Thus the attempt of

religious faith to think about and to live in relation to

transcendence is unavoidably or necessarily particular. The

transcending movement of faith can only occur in the context

of certain particular contents. When this second sense of

particularity is involved in the assertion that a particular

faith is true, it means that the particular contents of that

faith serve as the context or vehicle or springboard for that

transcending movement precisely insofar as those contents are

dialectically "transformed" (i.e., negated in their particu-

larity). Said again, the particular faith is true not by

virtue of the particularity of its contents, but by virtue

of the __function__ they play as an occasion for transcending.

A convenient shorthand for this second sense of particularity,

then, might be __particularity as occasion.__

Now religious pluralism could be understood in terms

of either of these senses of particularity since the affirmation

of either would necessarily involve a possible plurality of

religions. As noted above, however, the problem of religious

pluralism and truth arises in terms of the first sense of

particularity. Thus the attempt to resolve that problem by

affirming, with Jaspers, that more than one religion can

strictly be said to be true must likewise involve this stronger

sense of particularity.[16]

The "defense of particularity" outlined in the previous chapter is, of course, Jaspers' effort to sustain such a strong affirmation of particularity within the transformation required by his existential logic. And that defense does indeed establish the necessity or inevitability of historic particularity as the medium of transcending faith. As part of that defense, moreover, Jaspers argues strenuously against the objection that it is simply particularity as such (particularity as occasion) and thus any particularity and nothing really particular (i.e., as this particular) that counts. He speaks movingly of the richness of specific traditions and of the necessity of the type of concrete adoption exemplified by the "Here I stand" of figures like Giordino Bruno. While he demands the transformation of the contents of particular traditions and commitments into ciphers, he repeatedly stresses the necessary particularity of all ciphers and the fact that the truth of faith can be attained only in ever specific ciphers. Yet for all the inevitability of historic particularity, the argument for the significance of the particular in terms of the unique particularity of its contents (particularity as mediation), and thus as something

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[16]Once again, I am not here arguing that religious truth is in fact most adequately understood in terms of the first sense of particularity, but only that the attempt to resolve the problem of pluralism and truth by affirming the possibility of a plurality of true religions must somehow involve this sense of particularity.

significantly different and not simply an instance of a general
necessity - - this argument fails.

Take, for instance, the exemplary significance for
Jaspers' understanding of truth of a figure like Bruno. It can
be argued on historical grounds, I believe, that what was
important for Bruno, so important that he was willing to die
for it, was the truth in which he believed - - the truth, that
is, of the content of his belief. The same could also be said
of other exemplary figures like Thomas More and Luther. To put
the matter graphically, the fundamental accent in a "Here I
stand" uttered by any of these men would be upon the word "Here"
(i.e., with this conviction) regardless of how much emphasis
might also be placed upon the word "I." Yet for Jaspers the
significance of Bruno - - and the significance of More and
Luther for those others who have recently turned to them in
a similar way - - is not the truth of the content of his
belief, even when that content is understood dialectically as
cipher, but the truth of the form of that believing. In terms
of the idea of particularity exemplified by Jaspers' use of
Bruno, then, what is affirmed is not the particular content
of Bruno's belief (which has long since become a curiosity for
the history books), but the fact and form of his believing - -
not the "what" but the "how." That "how," of course, for all
three figures necessarily involved grappling with and affirming
particular contents. Yet the particularity is true not because
of those particular contents (as mediators) but because those

contents happened to be the locus (or _occasion_) for the movement

of existential faith. In terms of the question of pluralism,

then, while the content of what Bruno and Luther and More

affirmed (as regards, say, the authority of the papacy) is not

just different but in clear opposition, their significance is

the same and so too, finally, is their truth (as Existenz in

relation to transcendence); even if that truth could actually

be attained only in the historic adoption of particular and

divergent contents.

The point here can perhaps be made more clearly in

terms of Jaspers' notion of cipher. Just as his defense of

particularity could be recapitulated by reference to his

discussion of ciphers, so too the inadequacy of that defense

can be seen in that discussion. For what, it must be asked,

is the truth of a cipher, or in what sense might a particular

cipher be affirmed as true? As just indicated with reference

to Bruno's beliefs, such an affirmation might be made not by

virtue of a cipher's contents; although admittedly there would

be no cipher to affirm without particular contents, but by

virtue of its function. In fact the very idea of ciphers

refers not to some special category of beliefs but to an action

or function - - to a way of relating to particular beliefs or

better yet, to a way of relating to transcendence by means of

particular beliefs.[17] Certain beliefs, then, might be true

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[17]Cf.: Jean Wahl, _La Pensée de l'Existence_, pp. 130-
131: With Kierkegaard Jaspers stresses that existential truth
is not a matter of content but of the character or quality of
relation (not "what" but "how").

when appropriated as ciphers. That is to say they are true not as an adequate expression, however paradoxically or dialectically understood, of religious reality as revealed, say, in the "root experience" of some particular faith. They are true, rather, only insofar as they function as a vehicle or occasion for the movement of existential transcending, or, to change the language somewhat, only insofar as they serve to mediate the immediacy of Existenz as non-cognitive awareness of transcendence.[18] They serve this function, moreover, or they are appropriated as ciphers, precisely insofar as their particular content is transformed by being brought into suspension or negated. Thus while noting that the contents of traditional beliefs "used to impress men as true reality," Jaspers stresses;

> When we say "ciphers," we expressly do not
> mean to refer to things, matters, facts,
> realities, although it seems that cipher
> contents have mostly been viewed as
> realities . . . . The great step in which
> man transforms himself occurs . . . when
> the contents that have been conceived and
> visualized are stripped of objective
> reality.[19]

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[18]The point here is relevant not only for the formal beliefs of the different religious traditions, but also for more directly personal religious experiences. Thus, as noted above, Jaspers could well agree with Hopkins that "the world is charged with the grandeur of God." (Cf. GP:0, pp. 251-252.) Yet what he would mean would not, I think, be exactly what the poet meant. For on Jaspers' terms it is not strictly speaking the world, or things and events in the world, which is "charged with the grandeur of God." (Even if it were, we could not know that to be the case.) Rather the world, or objects and events in the world, might serve or function as cipher, as an occasion for the transcending awareness of Existenz.

[19]PFR, p. 92.

To put the matter in terms of the basic "subject-object dichotomy" framework of Jaspers' thoughts, it is only by means of the continual effort to move beyond or through the object "in the direction of transcendence" that the object becomes a cipher. The contents of a particular belief, then, could be affirmed as true insofar as they function as ciphers, and they can function as ciphers insofar as they are caught up in the dialectical process which negates their objectivity and keeps them in suspension.[20]

The idea of cipher, then, is at the heart of Jaspers' affirmation of particularity. There is no cipher without particular contents and without the historic adoption of those contents. Thus Jaspers can, as we have seen, affirm the truth of those contents:

> An Existenz adheres to its own traditional
> revelation of transcendence . . . in the
> particular form it has encountered and in
> the particular language . . . not on the
> ground that the revelation is one form of
> truth among others, that it is 'also true,'
> but because to Existenz this truth is truth
> pure and simple, the truth whereby its self-
> being will stand or fall.[21]

Here once again, however, the meaning of this very strong affirmation of particularity is not quite what it at first

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[20]The predominance of negation in the movement of Jaspers' dialectic can also be seen in the fundamental importance for him of the notions of "foundering" and "failure" and "ship-wreck," and the corresponding importance of metaphors of "transcending" and "breakthrough." Cf. Johannes Thyssen, "The Concept of 'Foundering' in Jaspers' Philosophy" in Schilpp, pp. 297-335.

[21]Ph III, p. 23 (cf. above, p. 172).

seems to be (and it will not carry the weight which Jaspers intends it to carry). When understood in terms of Jaspers' basic dialectic, what seems the quite straightforward meaning of his affirmation undergoes a basic change. Thus speaking of the same particularity Jaspers can also affirm:

> The truth which Existenz acquires here
> in coming to itself is purely phenomenal,
> but the phenomenon as such, objectively
> conceived and held fast, is not the truth;
> it was true only because there was trans-
> cendence in it at the same time.[22]

And again, speaking specifically in terms of the truth of ciphers, he can observe:

> Previously the cipher contents themselves
> were the final authority; now a higher one
> must decide whether or not truth speaks
> through the ciphers at a certain moment,
> within certain limits. The higher
> authority lies . . . in the living prac-
> tice of Existenz.[23]

Truth, in other words, is decided not by what the particular contents mediate but by how they occasion the immediacy of Existenz.[24]

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[22]Ph II, p. 109 (cf. above, p. 175).

[23]PFR, p. 92.

[24]Essentially the same argument about the priority of function over content in Jaspers' analysis of the logic of existential truth could be made in terms of Jaspers' idea of communication. Truth, he insists, can be attained only in communication and, just as in the case of ciphers, such communication necessarily involves particular contents and commitments. Once again, however, it is not the communicated contents, but the process itself, precisely in its failure to arrive at finally communicable content, which becomes the medium of truth. The "loving struggle" of communication, in other words, is itself the dialectic which brings those

Now the point of this review of Jaspers' notion of ciphers - - and of the resulting clarification of the priority of function over content in his understanding of existential truth - - is to show that Jaspers does indeed undercut the strong sense of particularity which he must sustain in order to make good on his intended resolution to the problem of pluralism and truth. For in terms of the two senses of particularity distinguished above, Jaspers clearly does establish the necessity of historic particularity as a vehicle or occasion for the attainment of truth. Truth is attainable, in his language, only via the adoption of particular belief contents as ciphers. But the transformation of those particular contents which is a condition of their adoption, and thus a condition of their possible truth, negates that other sense of particularity whereby the particular contents as such mediate transcendent truth. For as we have seen, it is not by virtue of their contents but by virtue of their function (which is to bring those contents into suspension) that ciphers are true. In terms of particular contents, then, ciphers remain irreducibly plural and opposed. Or, to put the matter more exactly, those irreducible oppositions whence the problem of pluralism and truth arose in the first place remain insofar as different beliefs are understood in terms of their particular contents. In terms of their truth, however,

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contents into suspension thereby establishing the possibility of existential transcending. Cf. above, pp. 166-167.

or when those same beliefs are understood in terms of their function as ciphers, the opposition of contents is no longer a matter of significance. Rather they all serve _in the same way_ as vehicles for transcending faith by virtue of the fact that their particular (opposed) contents "are stripped of objective reality." If they were not thus "stripped of objective reality" and consequently of their mutual opposition - - if, for instance, the Christian doctrine of biblical revelation were still to be understood to mean that God in fact does speak in an absolutely unique way in the literature of this particular book - - then they would not have been appropriated as ciphers and would not be true.

Jaspers would, of course, reject this whole line of argument on the grounds that content and function cannot thus be separated but are precisely what is held together in the process of adoption. I think it is nearer the truth, however, to suggest that Jaspers' discussion of pluralism and truth derives much of its seeming plausibility by playing upon the ambiguity involved in different ideas of truth and different senses of particularity (and thus of plurality). A possible plurality of true religions can be affirmed in terms of Jaspers' understanding of truth. Yet the character of that plurality has been changed or reduced from the plurality of particular and opposed beliefs (which were deeply problematic in terms of the question of the truth of their contents) to a plurality of particular but only accidentally different vehicles (which can

be equally true in terms of the truth of their function).

For all of the inevitability of particular and different beliefs to "mediate immediacy," then, a significant plurality of the type envisioned in proposed resolutions to the pluralism and truth dilemma is finally not possible on Jaspers' terms. Thus his account of the logic of religious truth fails to sustain the possible plurality it intends to affirm. Truth resides essentially in the movement of Existenz, in that inwardness or immediacy for which any particular mediator is simply a necessary, but in terms of its particular content finally indifferent occasion. It is, rather, Existenz which is the sole real mediator, all other mediators being true only insofar as they occasion or serve as means for this single mediator. Rather than speak of Jaspers' affirmation of a plurality of true religions, then, it would be more accurate to speak of his affirmation of the one true (philosophical) faith in terms of which all other (religious or philosophical) faiths must be transformed if they are to be true. Thus there is finally room in Jaspers' thought for the affirmation of particularity in the strong sense of that term - - for that one particular set of beliefs or, more broadly, that one particular vision of humanity which Jaspers regards as finally and thus normatively true (in the quite ordinary and straightforward sense of that term).[25] His

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[25]I have here argued that there is no room for the type of plurality in Jaspers which would be needed to resolve the pluralism and truth dilemma by examining the character of that particularity and plurality which are in fact sustained

philosophy affirms, in other words, that one significant

particularity which Heinrich Barth refers to as the 19th Century

idealist vision of human autonomy with its essentially inner and

unfettered relation to the divine.[26] In terms of the question

of religious (or philosophical) pluralism, that vision is

singular insofar as it does not exclude other historic partic-

ulars as different and opposed, but includes or absorbs them by

transforming all oppositions and appropriating all particularities

as so many different springboards for the one movement of inner

transcending. Thus it does provide a framework for religious

plurality, but at the price that all real difference is embraced

and nullified in the name of an overarching unity to history - -

a unity found in the immediacy of the autonomous subject.[27]

The answer to the specific question which has been the

focus of discussion in this dissertation, then, is negative. The

logic of religious truth proposed by Jaspers does not in the end

provide a basis for the view that a significant plurality of

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by his argument. Another more fundamentally direct approach would
have been to argue that, once again his own protestations to the
contrary notwithstanding, the contents of Jaspers' philosophy are
not themselves matters of faith but assertions which claim the
status of knowledge. Put differently, what he asserts about trans-
cendence and our relations to transcendence are cognitive assertions
which make particular, universal claims and exclude opposing claims.
For the beginnings of such an argument, cf. the important article
by William Earle, "Jaspers' Philosophical Anthropology" in Schilpp,
pp. 523-538.

[26]Op. cit., pp. 284-285; 290-291; cf. 275-276, 278.

[27]Ibid., pp. 281-282.

religions could all strictly speaking be said to be true. Yet

as has been clear from the beginning, Jaspers' efforts have not

simply been directed to the resolution of a logical puzzle.

They have, rather, been an attempt to find an adequate account

of religious truth - - an account which would be adequate not

only for a situation of pluralism but above all for a situation

of crisis. Thus before turning to some brief and concluding

suggestions concerning the fundamental reasons for the failure

of Jaspers' effort, it would be valuable, I think, to examine

in a bit more detail the character and extent of that failure.[28]

If, in other words, Jaspers fails to provide a logic for a

plurality of true religions because of his failure to sustain

a strong sense of particularity, what is the more general

significance of this loss of particularity for the adequacy

of his account of religious truth? Does his thought still

provide an adequate way of understanding religious plurality

and truth even if it does not provide a basis for affirming

a significant plurality of true religions? Or is the actual

(as distinct from the intended) result of his thought inadequate

not only as an account of religious plurality but also as an

account of religious truth? Does it, in effect, far from

establishing the intended possibility of a plurality of true

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[28]What follows is less an argument than a series
of related observations and implications flowing from the
preceding argument. The points made could, I believe, be
argued in detail but that is not attempted here.

religions, actually constitute a negation not only of plurality but also of religion?[29]

As noted on more than one occasion in the preceding pages, Jaspers insists on the eminently positive character of religious faith as that which distinguishes it from philosophical faith, on the one hand, and from the ersatz syntheses of supposedly universal religions, on the other. Yet it is, once again, just this positive element of the particular religions which would seem to be negated or transformed in their appropriation as ciphers. Jaspers, of course, would distinguish between that "embodiment" which must be negated and the religious positivity which remains even when religious particularities are transformed as ciphers.[30] Yet it is far from clear exactly what real difference this distinction is supposed to convey. For if the idea of the positive character of religious faith implies certain specific types of relations (such as reverence and worship) to certain particularities which are taken as "the actuality of something specifically holy in places, objects, and acts,"[31] then it is difficult to see how such relations can remain when they are subsumed within that controlling type of relationship dictated by Jaspers' notion of cipher - - a relationship characterized by the continual negation or bringing-into-suspension of

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[29]Cf. above, pp. 135-137, 140, 186 ss, 190 ss.

[30]Cf. above, pp. 190-191.

[31]R, p. 779.

particular contents ("stripped of objective reality"[32]). If, in other words, the sense of particularity which is actually affirmed by Jaspers' thought is not sufficient to allow a significant plurality of religions, then how can it be sufficient to sustain the strongly positive particularity which by Jaspers' own reckoning is essential for any specifically religious truth?

Once again the issue here is a complex one since, as noted, not only the descriptive theory but also the actual usage of the different religions bear testimony to various ways of balancing mediation and immediacy, or of holding together affirmation and negation in an appreciation of the sacramental. There are constant traditions within the great religions, such as the via negativa within Christianity to which Jaspers often refers,[33] which seem to emphasize transcendence to the exclusion of any positive qualification or mediation of the divine. Similarly there are those who would argue that true religion must constantly be released from its "Babylonian captivity," purified of all positivity, and understood as essentially a matter of inwardness or as a purely vertical transcending (via whatever inevitable symbols) to the total otherness of the divine. Standing against such an understanding of religion as pure inwardness, however, is the

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[32]PFR, p. 92.

[33]Cf. Ph I, p. 88; PFR, pp. 258-261.

historical reality of the central significance of certain

particular mediations (origins, scriptures, doctrinal formula-

tions) in all of the world's great religions. Against the

tendency to purify faith of all particular contents stands

the argument that faith without contents (in traditional

Western terms, _fides qua_ without _fides quae_) is self-destructive,

like "casting an anchor in shifting sands."[34] Far from purifying

and liberating faith such a purification actually destroys the

pathos of faith, rendering it directionless and apathetic, and

contributing further to the present crisis "in which our

alternatives seem increasingly to be reality divested of

symbols or symbols divested of reality."[35] On balance, then,

Jaspers would seem to be essentially correct in asserting

that it is the presence of positive mediations which is the

distinguishing characteristic of religion.[36] On balance, too,

however, it would seem to be just such positivity which his

understanding of the logic of religious truth effectively

undercuts.

Jaspers' philosophy is, as he admits, "religious" in

a very general sense of that term.[37] Thus it does in fact

provide a basis for that type of non-dogmatic religiousness

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[34]Such is Tilliette's (p. 131) critique of Jaspers.

[35]Friedmann, _Touchstones of Reality_, p. 232.

[36]R, pp. 777-779.

[37]R, p. 778.

which is today quite widespread. As the German philosopher

Johannes Thyssen notes:

> In an age which has largely lost its belief
> in the Christian dogmas, and which in its
> uncertainty and anxiety looks out for a new
> "hold," such a hold in divine Being is
> offered here . . . . In this sense Jaspers
> practices a far-reaching "demythologizing"
> and he says with regard to myths and reve-
> lations that his philosophy tries to retain
> their contents, though their claim to
> validity cannot stand. This endeavor, the
> sincerity and difficulty of which we have
> witnessed, is in fact an appeal to all who
> seek a spiritual hold and have access to
> philosophy. It leads the way to undogmatic
> religion by means of philosophy (in some
> respects comparable to the young Schleier-
> macher).[38]

Such "undogmatic religion" is, however, as Jaspers is quick

to point out,[39] something quite different from the specific

particularity of religion properly so called. Just how great

that difference is has been well described by C. S. Lewis in

the account of his own conversion. (I will cite at length

because of the relevance of Lewis' description to Jaspers'

discussion of religion.) Speaking of that philosophical

idealism which first provided him with a "spiritual hold,"

Lewis notes:

> . . . this proved that our discursive thought
> moved only on the level of "Appearance," and
> "Reality" must be somewhere else. And where
> else but, of course, in the Absolute? There,
> not here, was the "full splendor" behind "the
> sensuous curtain." The emotion that went with

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[38]Op. cit., pp. 334-335.

[39]R, pp. 778-779.

all this was certainly religious. But this
was a religion that cost nothing. We could
talk religiously about the Absolute; but
there was no danger of Its doing anything
about us. It was "there"; safely and
immovably "there." It would never come
"here," never (to be blunt) make a nuisance
of Itself. This quasi-religion was all a
one-way street; all _eros_ . . . steaming up,
but no _agape_ darting down. There was
nothing to fear; better still, nothing to
obey.[40]

This general religion might, of course, as in Lewis'

own case, serve as a preparation for a more specifically religious

conversion.[41] Or it might, as seems often the case today, serve

for those so inclined or so situated by reason of personal

history as a way of remembering and reappropriating the specif-

ically religious faith of their tradition even after they have

ceased to believe in the truth of the particular contents of

that faith. (In reality, of course, it is actually the

specifically religious contents which in such cases "serve"

as a vehicle for that general undogmatic faith.) But it is

at very least highly questionable whether even such remembering

and reappropriating can long sustain itself. Traditions are,

after all, remembered and reappropriated because they are

believed to be true -- because, in the terms used above,

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[40]_Surprised by Joy_ (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and
World, 1955), p. 210. A remarkably similar account is presented
in the autobiographical writings of Martin Buber. Cf. "Eine
Bekehrung" in _Begegnung: Autobiographische Fragmente_ (Stuttgart:
W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1961) pp. 36-38.

[41]Even so severe a critic as Karl Barth can stress the
positive significance of Jaspers' thought insofar as it continually

their contents are believed to be true. Unless the truth of
a tradition in this sense is the basis of commitment to it,
and not commitment the basis of its truth, the tradition has
already died. Put somewhat differently, "once we know that
horizons are relative and man-made, their power to sustain
us is blighted. Once we know them to be relative, they no
longer horizon us. We cannot live in a horizon when we
know it to be one."[42]

Jaspers, for instance, in one of the few cases where
he makes specific recommendations about the future reappro-
priation of particular religions, speaks continually of
"biblical religion" and of the necessity for the West to
retain that specific biblical heritage which has been one
of its most profound origins.[43] Yet as Ronald Gregor Smith
remarks, it is hard to understand how the biblical tradition
which Jaspers regards as so crucial can survive without Jews,
Christians, and Muslims - - without, in other words, communities
of those who take specific contents of biblical faith to be
true.[44] To be sure, Jaspers would maintain that this is
precisely what Jews, Christians, and Muslims must do if they

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points to man's fundamental openness to the reality of trans-
cendence. Cf. "Phänomene des Menschlichen" in Saner, ed., _Karl
Jaspers in der Discussion_, pp. 319 ss.

[42]George Grant, _Time as History_ (Toronto: Canadian
Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), p. 29.

[43]Cf. PSP, pp. 100-107; PFR, pp. 330-337, 355-356.

[44]"Introduction," to Jaspers' _The European Spirit_, p. 17.

are to attain truth. Yet in so doing, in taking "specific
contents of biblical faith to be true," they must simultaneously
keep those contents suspended as ciphers. In what sense then,
to reiterate the basic question upon which this entire critique
of Jaspers has been focused, are the contents of biblical faith
"taken to be true"? Or, to put the matter somewhat differently,
why would Jews, Christians, and Muslims want to return continually
to the difficult adoptive struggle with these particular contents
when those contents can be true only as ciphers (or functionally)?
What basis is there in the logic outlined by Jaspers for such
a narrowing of focus or, more generally, for any narrowly
religious relationship to specific, positive particularities?
Has not the sole solid basis for such specifically religious
wrestling (i.e., belief in the truth of particular contents
and positivities, however difficult or dialectical its attain-
ment) been undermined? It would seem that Jaspers' thought
in actual effect provides, rather, a basis for that loosening
and eventual loss of particularity whereby contemporary
religious man would become "like a Don Juan courting all the
gods."[45] Or even where the effect of Jaspers' thinking is
not so extreme, even where the particular contents of
traditional belief might still be "taken up as true," they
would, I think, be worn far too lightly when taken up as true

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[45]It is Paul Ricoeur (in Schilpp, p. 639) who thus
turns Kierkegaard's image against Jaspers.

in Jaspers' sense of the word.

Thus the problematic character of Jaspers' thought concerning religious truth runs rather deep. It is not just that his thinking does not provide a basis for the reappropriation of particular religious faiths in their diversity, nor even that it provides no solid footing for the remembrance of such remnants of the religious faiths which have thus far survived the present crisis. Rather by negating the strong sense of particularity and positivity which are fundamental to both plurality and religion it actually contributes to that decline of religious faith which it hopes to combat. (Here, once again, is the fact of actual contradiction between intention and performance.) In the image suggested by one of Jaspers' most sympathetic critics, his thinking stands like a Trojan horse within those very traditions he hopes to preserve.[46] While proclaiming the desirability and possibility of present reappropriation of the various religions in their diversity, it undercuts the basis of that diversity and of the possible truth of each particular tradition, and absorbs the different traditions into the unacknowledged unity of a prior or more fundamental (and non-religious) faith. Jaspers' thought, moreover, effects this negation even as it depends for its own truthfulness upon the continuation of those traditions

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[46]Jeanne Hersch, p. 604.

which it negates - - thus sawing off, so to speak, the branch
it is sitting on.[47] And this undercutting of his own position
is true in an even more general sense insofar as his thought
in effect negates that particularity which by its own account
is crucial to the logic of existential truth. At best, then,
Jaspers' philosophy makes possible the truth of an undogmatic
religious faith which transforms the traditional religions
into so many of its own accidentally different vehicles.
At worst, however, it unintentionally cuts the ground out
from any possible affirmation of religious truth, simultaneously
throwing itself and any notion of transcendent faith into
serious question.

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By way of conclusion I would like briefly to suggest
an explanation for Jaspers' failure to provide an adequate
account of religious truth, an explanation which, I believe,
points in a more fruitful direction for thought about the
question of pluralism and truth. What follows, however,
cannot be understood as a necessary conclusion from the

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[47]Jaspers' views on the dependence of philosophy upon the
more "sociologically effective transmission" of the contents of
faith by the religions have already been noted (cf. PSP, p. 112),
as has Heinrich Barth's judgment (Op. cit., p. 279) that the power
and appeal of Jaspers' thought derive from the continued presence
in it of the earlier traditions of Western thought and belief. In
this regard, Jeanne Hersch (pp. 603-609), developing the Trojan
horse metaphor, notes that "perhaps all of us - - and more than
anyone Jaspers in whom is incarnated . . . a whole tradition - -
are like the children of rich men who live unknowingly off a

preceding critical arguments, nor is it essential to the completion of those arguments. Still, since it does flow from that argumentation, it is presented here as a concluding note - - a postscript which at this point remains quite literally (and not ironically) "unscientific," or an afterthought which sketches ideas that need to be taken up in more critical detail in later work.

Throughout the present work, in both the presentation of Jaspers' thought and the subsequent critique, the issue most central to the discussion of pluralism and truth has been the issue of particularity. Any attempt to argue for the possibility of a plurality of true religions and, more generally, any attempt to provide an adequate account of religious truth must, I have maintained, allow sufficient weight or status to the particularity characteristic of religious truth - - to the particular contents or claims whereby the various traditions stand distinct and in opposition, and to the particular positivity characteristic of religion as such. Jaspers is aware of this requirement and the affirmation of such particularity is clearly central to the logic whereby he intends to resolve the dilemma of pluralism and truth. Yet that intention, as we have seen, is contradicted when the significance of his affirmation of particularity is changed by other aspects of his

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still sumptuous inheritance (while we think it already exhausted). Perhaps we are going to leave our descendants a misery far deeper than we can ever imagine." (Emphasis added.)

thought which are in tension with or, more accurately, antag-

gonistic to it. In the preceding pages the effect of this

basic antagonism in Jaspers' thought has been described in

terms of the specific character of the dialectic involved

in his understanding of religious truth and then in terms of

the way in which that dialectic changes or transforms the

type of particularity which is actually affirmed or sustained.

In all of the preceding critique, however, there

has not yet been any real explanation of this fundamental

antagonism. Why is it, in other words, that performance

undercuts intention? What is it in Jaspers' thought that

brings about the effective loss of that emphasis upon

particularity which it needs to maintain? The answer, I

want to suggest, is to be found not in some detail of his

explicit defense of particularity (Chapter IV) but in the

framework (Chapter III) within which that defense occurs.

Said somewhat differently, the basic tension or antagonism

in his thought can best be understood as a tension between

the intentions and affirmation of his defense of particu-

larity, on the one hand, and the foundations upon which

that defense is built, on the other. Jaspers provides

what is probably the best account of particularity (or

certainly one of the best) that is possible within the

framework provided by those foundations. The inadequacy

of his account, then, suggests a more basic inadequacy

in those foundations. (Thus the remark repeated frequently

above that a full critique of Jaspers' discussion of religious

truth would take us to today's most fundamental and contro-

versial issues.) It suggests, in other words, that there is

something about those foundations which is inimical to the

type of emphasis upon particularity required for an adequate

account of religious plurality and truth. It further suggests,

then, that the effort to find a more adequate account would

have to build upon different foundations or to move in funda-

mentally different directions.[48]

Of course the foundational or fundamental framework

within which Jaspers develops his defense of particularity is

what has here been continually referred to (in summary fashion)

as his essentially Kantian understanding of subjectivity and

objectivity, knowledge and freedom. It is, to put the matter

in a slightly different way, the shared heritage of 19th

Century German idealism to which Jaspers gives a current and

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[48]There is, of course, an alternative explanation:
Jaspers' account of particularity is not at all the best account,
nor even one of the better accounts possible on these foundations.
There have, in fact, been far better accounts of particularity,
and specifically of religious particularity, which have been
developed in terms of essentially the same (Kantian or idealist)
foundations. Thus Jaspers' failure is not representative and
does not indicate the need for some fundamentally different
approach to thought about religious pluralism.

Those who might be persuaded somewhat by the preceding
critique of Jaspers, but who nonetheless find significant
resources for thought about religious truth in the work of
others (Tillich, for instance) who build on essentially the
same foundations, would understand Jaspers' failure in some
such terms. For my part, I am suggesting that Jaspers' failure
is, in fact, fully understood only in terms of this inadequacy

particularly Kantian expression. These foundations, then,
represent and express an extremely complex and sophisticated
tradition of human thought. Yet for all their complexity
they fail to provide the basis for an adequate account of
religious particularity and they pervert that affirmation
of such particularity which Jaspers'; thought intends. Thus
while I can do so only with very broad strokes and at the
price of great oversimplification, I want to suggest why
these foundations are essentially problematic for thought
about religious pluralism and truth.

The image of a "Copernican revolution" was, of
course, used by Kant himself to indicate the fundamentally
(or foundationally) new point of departure for his thoughts.
It proclaimed a fundamental inversion of the priority of
subject and object as the focus of thought. And it is, I
believe, this inversion - - or perhaps it would be more
accurate to say it is the particular Kantian understanding
of subject and object and of their relations in knowledge
and freedom - - which is at the root of the failure of
Jaspers' discussion of religious pluralism. For Jaspers,
as we have seen, lays the foundations for that discussion by

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of the foundations of his thought, and that this failure would
thus also be found in those who share these same foundations.
My position would have to be argued, of course, either by
examining the specific accounts of religious truth provided by
those other thinkers or by showing, and not simply suggesting,
that there is something fundamentally inimical to an adequate
account of particularity in this whole approach to the question
of religious truth.

analysing the dichotomy of subject and object. Yet the emphasis
and weight of this analysis falls heavily upon the subject, and
not simply on the subject as the center of consciousness, but
above all on the subject as active and free. The basic and
controlling program of Jaspers' thinking is from the first,
then, the Kantian denial of knowledge to make room for freedom
and then to understand faith in terms of that freedom.

Thus while the various elements in Jaspers' "system"
are interwoven in a fluid and changing way, it seems clear
that the real center of his thinking is the idea of freedom
given with the understanding of subjectivity as Existenz.
This idea of freedom, moreover, while quite widespread, is
also a quite particular, even peculiar understanding of freedom
and subjectivity. On its terms, a human being is fully human,
or becomes a person, only insofar as she or he becomes an
autonomous self. And becoming an autonomous self, or becoming
subjective, means being free in such a way that there are, at
least in that personal realm where freedom is possible, no
obstacles, no "other" which stands over against me and lays
claim upon me thereby negating my autonomy. To put the matter
differently, knowledge and freedom are, as we have seen through-
out in Jaspers' thinking, basically incompatible. Where there
is knowledge (or revelation) and the constraint of facts and
objects, there can be no freedom. Freedom arises only at the
limits of knowledge, or on the boundary, where objectivity
and the definite are kept suspended by the dialectical movement

of thought. What arises at the boundary for Jaspers is not

the absolute and absurd freedom of that existentialism against

which much of his thinking is directed. Nor is this boundary

and the emergence of Existenz, as we have seen, somehow totally

separable from existence, from the world of objects and events

and knowledge. Yet freedom can emerge (and thus faith can

become possible) only with the dialectical suspension of such

objects and events and knowledge. The controlling image in

Jaspers' thinking, then, is that of a certain type of freedom

or autonomy, a certain type of authentic human subjectivity,

which is finally possible only via the exclusion or sub-

ordination of otherness.

Thus the understanding of subjectivity which is central

to the foundations of Jaspers' thought entails a corresponding

sense of objectivity. Historically, of course, the emergence

of the understanding of freedom which is foundational for

Jaspers' thought was, as already suggested, integrally connected

with the loss of the traditional idea of nature (as _telos_) and

the rise of modern science. It is, in other words, inseparable

from a severe limitation not only of the scope but also of the

meaning of knowledge and objectivity. In the Kantian language

employed by Jaspers, only phenomena, objects as they appear to

us, are knowable, and then only in always restricted horizons

or frames of reference. Such objects, moreover, are not

directly relevant to our basic human or existential questions.

More generally, then, the world as such contains no word for

us as human beings, no answer to our fundamental human questions. It is, to play upon Jaspers' metaphor, only at the boundary and never at the center of things that such an answer might be found. Or, in another of his telling metaphors, even if it is possible to experience that boundary only in the realm of existence, or only through the world of objects and events, that answer is experienced as a <u>breakthrough</u> which shatters the actuality of the objective. It would appear, then, although much more would have to be said in order to make this account adequate, that the definite otherness which we encounter in various ways (whether as physical objects, or ideas, or persons, or events) must inevitably play a limited and, I think it is fair to say, <u>merely</u> functional role which corresponds to the understanding of freedom in Jaspers' scheme of things.[49] Frequently an obstacle, it can at best serve as

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[49]In his book <u>Christ and Apollo</u> (New York: Mentor-Omega, 1963), pp. 23-26, theologian and literary critic William Lynch explores various essentially negative "attitudes toward the finite" or "images of the finite" which quite closely parallel aspects of the significance of the objective in Jaspers' thought. There are, firstly, those imaginations which "try to achieve a tenuous, mystical contact with the finite, touching it just sufficiently . . . to produce mystical vision, but not solidly enough . . . for their vision to be impaired by the actuality of things." They use the concretely real as "a sort of resilient, rubbery surface off which to rebound as quickly as possible into various parts of the sky." Then there are those who "desire to touch the finite as lightly as possible in order to rebound, not into a quick eternity . . . but back into the self." And finally there are those whose imagination "penetrates, at least to some degree, into our human flesh and environment," but then recoils from the fundamental darkness it finds, and "flies, in a second movement that is unrelated to the first and constitutes an act

a means or a mediator, but never in such a way that it hinders the more fundamental priority of freedom or immediacy.

Thus the "Copernican revolution" of Kantian thought results in that specific understanding of subjectivity and objectivity which is foundational for Jaspers' discussion of religious truth and which is, finally, the basic reason for the inadequacy of that discussion. For within the framework established by this fundamental understanding of subjectivity and objectivity it does not seem possible to maintain the significance of those definite mediations which are, even on Jaspers' own terms, an essential aspect of religious truth and a fundamental condition of significant religious pluralism.

If, then, discussion of religious pluralism and truth is to be something more than (self) deception veiling the gradual disappearance of all diversity, if in other words it intends (with Jaspers) to take plurality and thus particularity seriously, then it would seem that such discussion must (against Jaspers) take place within more adequate foundations. It must attempt to reassemble the pieces of the puzzle within a framework fundamentally different from Jaspers', within an understanding of subjectivity and objectivity which would allow a far more positive appreciation of objectivity and thus a more complex

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of rebellion and escape, into a tenuous world of infinite bliss." None of these types, of course, exactly fits Jaspers, but the parallels do, I think, illuminate his more abstractly worded understanding (or image) of the objective and illustrate in turn the extent to which his understanding is not at all atypical.

picture of subjectivity. It must, for instance, be based
upon an understanding of objectivity which could admit the
possibility of a word spoken in answer to the fundamental human
questions not (or not only) at the boundary, but at the center
of things, through particular (and thus possibly plural)
mediations. And it must be based on an understanding of
subjectivity which could better accommodate those typically
religious attitudes of reverence, worship, and obedience
which arise in response to such particular mediations. In
more general terms, then, a potentially adequate approach
to the question of religious pluralism, and more specifically
to the quest for an understanding of religious truth which
could admit the possibility of a plurality of true religions,
must be based in some way upon a basic change in the direction
of thinking, a reversal, so to speak, of the previous (Kantian)
inversion of the priority of subject and object.

Having said this, of course, one has in a sense said
very little. For while there are discussions of religious
pluralism and truth which seem to move in the direction indi-
cated by this conclusion,[50] it is at best only a general
direction. The simple assertion, moreover, that such a general
change in direction is necessary begs the really difficult

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[50] I personally find, for instance, that Maurice
Friedmann's attempt to totally jettison the language of sym-
bolism and to understand religious truth in terms of "touch-
stones of reality" is quite promising. Cf. Touchstones of
Reality., esp. pp. 21-29, 216-233.

question of whether it is possible - - whether, in other words,
a more adequate understanding of subjectivity and objectivity
can be established and what such an understanding would look
like. Still; if Jaspers is correct in claiming that the
foundations of his thought articulate pervasive conditions
governing life and thought in our age - - and I think he is
basically correct in this claim - - then perhaps the rather
minimal suggestion that one cannot think fruitfully about
the question of religious pluralism within his foundations
is not altogether insignificant. If, in other words, the
preceding critique of Jaspers is fundamentally correct, then
the analysis of Jaspers' thinking (and thereby of a predominant
type of contemporary thinking) will at least have succeeded in
calling into question a major and temptingly available avenue
for thought about the problem of religious pluralism - - even
if it leaves the hard questions unanswered and the hard work
yet to be done. That hard work would involve a far more
fundamental critique of Jaspers' thought than was attempted
here as one step toward the establishment of a more adequate
foundational thinking. It would involve a more positive
effort to think through the problem of religious pluralism
and truth in terms of this changed direction and these more.
adequate foundations. For the present, however, it must
suffice to suggest that those are the tasks of the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

What follows is not a complete bibliography of works
consulted for the present study, and much less a bibliography
of available literature on the topic of the study. It is,
rather, a listing under various headings of all works cited
and of all other key works actually used in the preparation
of this study.

For a more complete bibliography of Jaspers' works
see Klaus Piper, ed., Karl Jaspers: Werk und Wirkung (München:
R. Piper and Co. Verlag, 1963) which contains the most complete
published bibliography. It includes information on Jaspers'
works (and on many translations) by year until 1962, but its
compiler now notes that it "contains quite a few errors."[1]
A corrected version of this bibliography, updated through
1972, has been prepared for the announced, but to my knowledge
not yet published second German edition of P. A. Schilpp, ed.,
Karl Jaspers (originally published in 1957 by W. Kohlhammer
Verlag, Stuttgart and simultaneously in English by Tudor
Publishing Company, New York and containing an earlier version
of the bibliography which appears in Karl Jaspers: Werk und
Wirkung). An extensive and critical "Primär-Bibliographie"
has been prepared for separate publication by Karl Kunert and

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[1] Letter from Hans Saner (Basel, February 10, 1974).

-242-

Gisela Gefken (Landesbibliothek, Oldenburg), but no publisher
has yet been found. They have also collected material for
an extensive "Sekundär-Bibliographie" which as of mid-1974
contained over ten-thousand titles arranged under various
topical headings. An account of Jaspers' unpublished manu-
scripts is given by Hans Saner, his literary executor, in
"Zu Karl Jaspers' Nachlass" in Hans Saner; ed., Karl Jaspers
in der Discussion (München: R. Piper & Company Verlag, 1973)
pp. 449-463.

    While the secondary literature on Jaspers, even as
it relates only to his thought about religious questions, is
immense, there are fairly extensive and representative biblio-
graphies in the works listed below (section 2) by Klein,
Pfeiffer, and Samay.

1. Works by Karl Jaspers

    Each item is listed according to the edition and/or
translation actually used, with additional information given
about the original source in the case of later editions and
translations. (As noted above in the Preface, where the
translation of any passage seemed doubtful, it has been
checked against the original.) Works referred to throughout
by means of abbreviations are here preceded by those
abbreviations.

CT   Chiffren der Transzendenz. Ed. by Hans Saner. 2nd.
        ed. München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1972. Text
        of 1961 course lectures, first published in 1970.

The European Spirit. Trans. by R. G. Smith. London:
    SCM, 1948. 1946 lecture delivered at the Ren-
    contres Internationales de Genève and first
    published in L'Esprit Européen, Rencontres
    Internationales de Genève 1946. (Paris: 1946),
    pp. 291-323.

EH   Existentialism and Humanism: Three Essays. Trans.
    by E. B. Ashton. New York: Russell F. Moore
    Co., 1952. Articles originally published
    separately - - "Unsere Zukunft und Goethe"
    in 1947, "Solon" in 1948, and "Über
    Bedinguhgen und Möglichkeiten eines neuen
    Humanismus" in 1949 - - and collected along
    with other articles and speeches in
    Rechenschaft und Ausblick (München: R.
    Piper & Co. Verlag, 1951).

GP:F   The Great Philosophers: The Foundations. Ed. by
    Hannah Arendt. Trans. by R. Manheim. New
    York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1962.
    Originally published as part of Die grossen
    Philosophen. I (München: R. Piper & Co.
    Verlag, 1957).

GP:O   The Great Philosophers: The Original Thinkers.
    Ed. by Hannah Arendt. Trans. by R. Manheim.
    New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc.,
    1962. Originally published as two separate
    works: as part of Die grossen Philosophen, I
    (München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1957) and
    as Nikolaus Cusanus (München: R. Piper & Co.
    Verlag, 1964).

"The Importance of Kierkegaard," trans. by E. W.
    Geissman, Cross Currents 2 (1951-52), 5-16.
    A 1951 lecture first published as "Kierke-
    gaard - - Leben und Werk" in Universitas,
    VI #1 (Stuttgart, 1951) 1057-1070.

"The Importance of Nietzsche, Marx, and Kierkegaard
    in the History of Philosophy," trans. by S.
    Godman, The Hibbert Journal 49 (1950-51),
    226-234. Article originally published as "Zu
    Nietzsche's Bedeutung in der Geschichte der
    Philosophie" in Die neue Rundschau, LXI
    (Frankfurt am Main, 1950) 346-358.

Leonardo, Descartes, Max Weber: Three Essays. Trans.
    by R. Manheim. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul,
    1965. Originally published as three separate

works: <u>Lionardo als Philosoph</u> (Bern: Franke
Verlag, 1953), <u>Descartes und die Philosophie</u>
(Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1937), and
<u>Max Weber: Deutsches Wesen im politischen</u>
<u>Denken, im Forschen und Philosophieren</u>
(Oldenburg i. O.: G. Stalling, 1932).

MMA   <u>Man in the Modern Age</u>. Trans. by E. Paul and C. Paul.
Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc.,
1957. First published as <u>Die geistige Situation</u>
<u>der Zeit</u> (Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1931).

MC   <u>Myth and Christianity</u>. With Rudolf Bultmann. Trans.
by N. Guterman. New York: The Noonday Press,
1969. First published as <u>Die Frage der</u>
<u>Entmythologisierung</u> (München: R. Piper & Co.
Verlag, 1954).

"Nekrolog von Karl Jaspers selbst Verfasst,"
<u>Gedankenfeier für Karl Jaspers am 4 März 1969</u>.
Basler Universitäts Reden, 60 Heft. Basel:
Verlag Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1969.

<u>Nietzsche and Christianity</u>. Trans. by E. B. Ashton.
Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1951. Based on a
lecture delivered in 1938; first published as
<u>Nietzsche und das Christentum</u> (Hameln: Seifert,
1946).

OMP   "On My Philosophy." Trans. by F. Kaufmann. In <u>Existen-</u>
<u>tialism from Dostoevshy to Sartre</u>. Ed. by
Walter Kaufmann. New York: Meridian Books,
1968, pp. 131-158. Essay first published
in Italian translation in 1941, and first
appearing in German as "Über meine Philosophie"
in <u>Rechenschaft und Ausblick</u> (München: R. Piper
& Co. Verlag, 1951).

OGH   <u>The Origin and Goal of History</u>. Trans. by M. Bullock.
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968. First
published as <u>Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte</u>
(Zürich: Artemis, 1949).

PSP   <u>The Perennial Scope of Philosophy</u>. Trans. by R.
Manheim. Archon Books, 1968. 1947 lecture
first published as <u>Der philosophische Glaube</u>
(Zürich: Artemis, 1948).

PA   "Philosophical Autobiography." Trans. by P. A. Schilpp
and L. B. Lefebre. <u>The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers</u>.

Ed. by P. A. Schilpp. New York: Tudor Publishing
Co., 1957, pp. 5-94. Published simultaneously in
German in P. A. Schilpp, ed., <u>Karl Jaspers</u>
(Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1957).

PFR   <u>Philosophical Faith and Revelation</u>. Trans. by E. B.
Ashton. London: Collins, 1967. Translation of
<u>Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der
Offenbarung</u> (cf. below).

<u>Philosophie</u>. 3 vols. 3rd edition with a 1955 "After-
word." Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1956. First
published in 1932.

PGO   <u>Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung</u>.
München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1962.

Ph I   <u>Philosophy</u>. 3 vols. Trans. of. 3rd edition of
Ph II   <u>Philosophie</u> by E. B. Ashton. Chicago: The
Ph III   University of Chicago Press, 1969, 1970, 1971.

PW   <u>Philosophy and the World</u>. Trans. by E. B. Ashton.
Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1963. Partial
translation of <u>Philosophie und Welt</u> (München:
R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1958), a collection of
lectures and essays originally published
between 1949 and 1957.

PE   <u>Philosophy of Existence</u>. Trans. by R. F. Grabau.
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,
1971. 1937 lectures first published as
<u>Existenzphilosophie</u> (Berlin: W. de Gruyter
& Co., 1938).

<u>Provokationen</u>. Ed. by Hans Saner. München: R. Piper
& Co. Verlag, 1969. A collection of interviews
and conversations dating from 1960 through 1968.

RAR   <u>Reason and Anti-Reason in Our Time</u>. Trans. by S.
Godman. London: SCM, 1952. 1950 lectures
published as <u>Vernunft und Widervernunft in
unserer Zeit</u>. (München: R. Piper & Co.
Verlag, 1950).

RE   <u>Reason and Existenz</u>. Trans. by W. Earle. New York:
The Noonday Press, 1971. 1935 lectures published
as <u>Vernunft und Existenz</u> (Groningen: Wolters, 1935).

R   "Reply to my Critics." Trans. by P. A. Schilpp and
L. B. Lefebre. <u>The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers</u>.

Ed. by P. A. Schilpp. New York: Tudor Publishing
Co., 1957, pp. 749-869. Published simultaneously
in German in P. A. Schilpp, ed., <u>Karl Jaspers</u>
(Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1957).

<u>Schicksal und Wille: Autobiographische Schriften</u>.
Ed. by Hans Saner. München: R. Piper & Co.
Verlag, 1967. A collection of autobiographical
writings originally written in 1938, 1939-1942,
1966-1967, and 1967.

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Harry T. Moore, and Karl W. Deutsch. Archon Books,
1969. A translation of <u>Von der Wahrheit</u>, pp. 915-
961 (cf. below).

<u>Truth and Symbol</u>. Trans. by Jean T. Wilde, William
Kluback, and William Kimmel. New Haven: College
and University Press, 1959. A translation of
<u>Von der Wahrheit</u>, pp. 1022-1054 (cf. below).

VdW   <u>Von der Wahrheit</u>. München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag,
1958. First published in 1947.

WW   <u>Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy</u>. Trans.
by R. Manheim. New Haven: Yale University Press,
1970. 1950 lectures published as <u>Einführung in
die Philosophie</u> (Zürich: Artemis, 1950).

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Hans Saner, ed., <u>Karl Jaspers in der Discussion</u>, pp. 274-
296. München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1973.

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Dogmatik</u>, III/2, 128-143. Zürich: Zollikon, 1948.
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pp. 319-334. München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1973.

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